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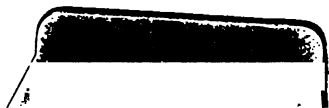
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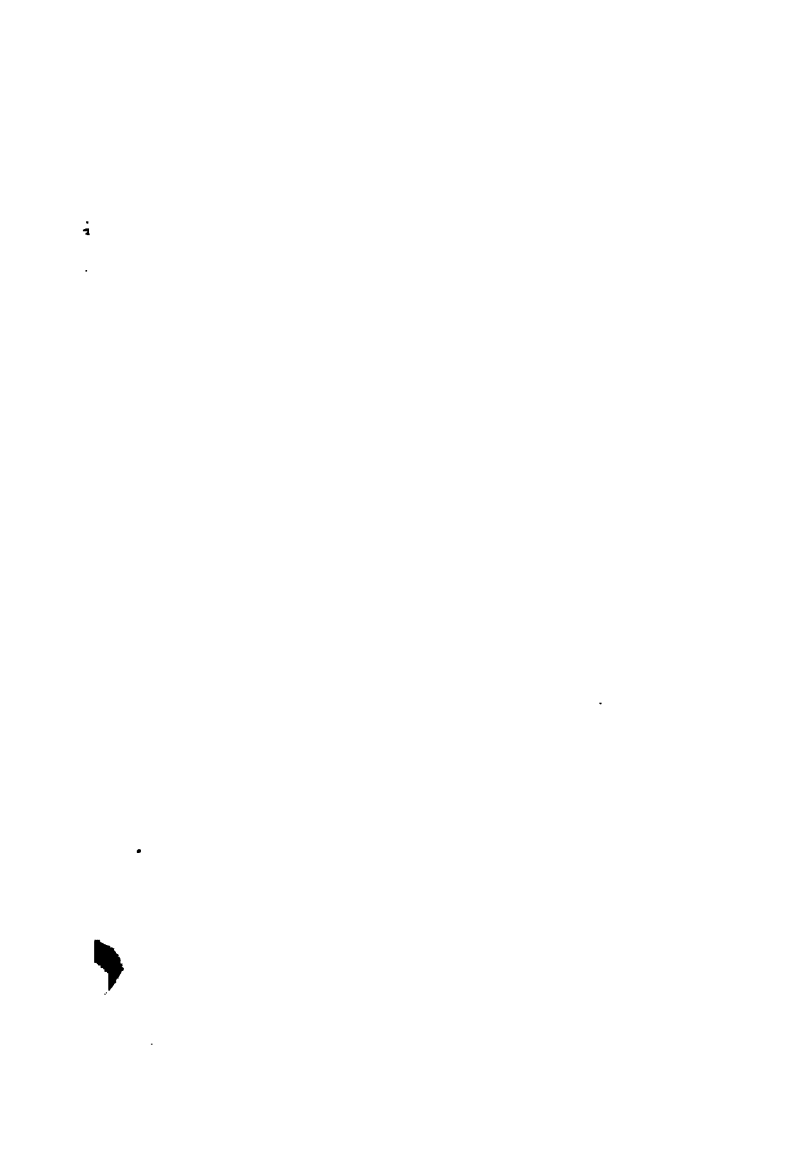
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S. Salmis in the Wilderness



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S. John's in the Wilderness,

OR

TRUE STORIES

OF

A COUNTRY PARISH.

L.



LONDON:

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1857.

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2

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY GREAT - GRANDFATHER,
ARD WALKER, ESQ.,
OF
GROVE HOUSE, HUNSLET, AND PARK PLACE, LEEDS;
WHO, LIVING, WAS KNOWN AMONGST US
BY DEEDS, NOT WORDS;
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED.

HE SHALL ENTER INTO PEACE; THEY SHALL REST IN THEIR
BEDS, EACH ONE WALKING IN HIS UPRIGHTNESS.

PREFACE.

WE have all, at times, felt very uncomfortable from being in the presence of one to whom we did not like to speak, because we had not been "introduced." Yet I do not think that English people would be generally willing, in continental fashion, to dispense with the ceremony of introduction. And this induces me to write a few words of preface to this little book. For a preface stands in the position of a third person, in presenting a book to that terrible personality, the wide, wide world. I am not the author of this volume; and therefore, gentle reader, do not fear that parental affection renders me blind to its defects, but put implicit confidence in everything I say. Now, S. John's I know well, and, by sad experience, the moral wilderness in which it stands: and,

in so far as I am conscious of any kindness of heart and love of truth and goodness, I hope that I know *you*. Therefore permit me, without further ceremony, to introduce to you "S. John's in the Wilderness." Do you cautiously enquire whether the acquaintance is desirable? I can only answer that if you would like to be reminded of the silver lining to that cloud which enwraps so much on earth—if you are desirous of becoming a co-worker with God, in giving succour, help, and comfort to those who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation,—if you welcome encouragement in ministering to Christ in the person of His little ones,—I am sure you will glean both pleasure and profit from these life-sketches taken in our Parish.

CLERICUS.

EASTER, 1857.

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S. JOHN'S IN THE WILDERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

OUR CHURCHYARD.—GOD'S ACRE.

I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial ground God's Acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

God's Acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts
Comfort to those, who in the grave have sown
The seed, that they have garnered in their hearts
Their bread of life; alas! no more their own.

Into its furrows shall we all be cast,
In the sure faith that we shall rise again,
At the great harvest, when the archangel's blast
Shall winnow, like a fan, the chaff and grain.

With thy rude ploughshare, Death, turn up the sod,
And spread the furrow for the seed we sow;
This is the field and acre of our God,
This is the place where human harvests grow!

LONGFELLOW.

THERE is something very melancholy in the aspect of a *city* Churchyard; set apart in all the terrible loneliness of a crowd by its dull bleak wall, or sooty iron palings, and over-run for the most part by festering green mould, which corrodes the

dusky pavement. That pavement is indeed composed of many slabs, and each one of them covers, we know, at least *one* mouldering body of death. The thought of all this is apt to beget impressions of the *future*, very like those which are suggested of the *present*, by the marred and faded forms of the men and women who dwell in the dark alleys around it. For in one oppressive sense of *blank*—a profound and gloomy chaos of woe which waits on the poor hope of annihilation, we grope vainly within the dark places of a golgotha, and in the full and ghastly vision of the pale horse upon which Death sat, and Hell followed hard after him, the mind takes no account of that better vision of Him who sits on the white horse of the Conqueror, wearing the crown; for He liveth and was dead, and His name is called, the Word of God.

It is quite different with *our* Churchyard; although it is true that the little Church in the centre can boast neither of size nor beauty, for it is simply built of blocks of stone, rough-hewn, and of a reddish brown colour, which however contrasts very prettily with the shining green of the broad-leaved Portugal laurels that cluster in tiny thickets about its sides, just high enough to peep in at the long Gothic windows. Its only architectural ornaments are two pierced and winding

turrets of white stone, and, in a niche over the great doorway, the carved statue of a saint clothed in long draperies. But it is the Churchyard that interests one; it is gracefully skirted to the south and screened from the rough winds by a few tall trees,—beeches, and feathery pine,—so that it is always green and warm. Here and there are little garden borders, planted with fragrant lavender and delicate lilac bushes, and encircling separate headstones, which gleam out with a desolate whiteness; for there are a few sculptured tombs, and some of them are marked with the Cross, the sign of salvation, and others tell us thankfully that whom death separates, the grave unites; but there is not one of them in that questionable taste which seeks obtrusively to violate the stern equality of death. Others, indeed by far the greater number, are laid down soft and mossy, like beds made ready for the weary to rest in; some are full-grown, and some are very short; but in and out of them all the wild red and silver daisies flower, and weeping willows grow upon their thin grey stems, and beside them, in unchanging olive-green hue, the mystic branches of the Tree of Life. Nearly in the middle is an almond tree, which foretels the spring before winter is over, it is at that time so thickly covered with its flaky white blossoms, and leafless boughs; shewing in strong relief to a dark yew tree close by. And

here, at sundown and all afternoon, the shadows fall upon the turf of palest green, so very still and clear; and the light plays in streaks, and shining spots, and wandering paths, like the beaming foot-prints of an angel; for the peace which abides there is perfect, and the rest is inviolate; anticipating, and as it were entering into, that spirit of joy which is given in the habitations of light and happiness, in the abodes of blessedness, where every sorrow is exiled afar.

It is well for us sometimes to dwell among the tombs; to evoke those gentle recollections which come fresh and fragrant, even from the still waters of our childhood's memory; for the best and the fairest, the true, the innocent, the kindly-affectioned, are commonly carried there first; because, in the beautiful words of the Pilgrim's Progress, "The Master was not willing they should be so far from Him any longer." Perhaps when they were alive, we slighted them, and said that they were just like other people, because it was not convenient to us to own or to imitate them, or because they did not do their work in our way; or, lazily and unthankfully, we have entered into their labours,—taken possession, as a thing of course, of the enjoyments and the friends which *their* memory has made sure to us. Any how, let us no longer persist in so

unloving a thing, as to forget, and to live apart from, the ennobled and the happy dead.

And if, as Christians, we *mean* what we say, often as we repeat those words, "I believe in the resurrection of the body;" then, over and above all that partakes of what is selfish and individual, must our Churchyards be very near and dear to us, because they are so many separate leaves in that Book of Life, to be put together and deciphered, not one missing, on the resurrection morning. In that day of trembling limbs and failing hearts, there will indeed be a dissolution of all that we now call "national and historical records," whether those that are contained in deep books, or bound up in wise laws, or embodied to the eye in those vast and ancient buildings which look as if they had been set up so solidly on purpose to meet the fires of the judgment day. But when all these shall have passed away as a scroll, fitly indeed and necessarily so; because all that is national and social will then and there be absorbed in the one great family of God, our Churchyards will not even then lose *their* interest, as having been, what they are *now*, the last earthly resting-places of the just; whilst yet the shadow of the great white throne was falling deeper over us, and the night was nearer to its close, and the day nearer to its dawn.

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE CROSS-BEARER.

Whom Christ hath blessed, and called His own,
He tries them early, look and tone,
Bent brow and throbbing heart;
Tries them with *pain*, dread seal of love.

LYRA INNOCENTIUM.

WE are very proud of our pretty School-house. It is built of tinted stone with white mullions, and pointed gables, and a curious mosaic roof of red and purple tiles, that shine just like polished marbles in the sun. And it stands on the very edge of a beautiful Down, always covered with short, soft turf, of that dark deep green peculiar to Gloucestershire, the smooth surface dotted by many a great hawthorn, which scent the air all round with their sweet pearly blossoms, and broken here and there by curious hollows that are quite a little study for the naturalist, for in them the golden cistus, and the pink heath, and innumerable wild flowers peep out from between the grey-moss stones and the sheltering blackberry bushes, forming soft nests for the loveliest things, such as the

delicate grasshopper, the small azure-blue butterflies, and the grand peacock moth. All is so *small*, yet so infinitely full of *life* in multiplied forms, that one almost expects to see the mushroom table of the fairies set under the shadow of the elegant fern leaves, as it used to be in days of old.

But since this world was overshadowed by the tree which bore a twofold fruit, good out of evil, and evil in good, we have never been short of hard contrasts, set side by side, even in the visible creation, a sort of sacramental sign of what it must be within, till we come where there are no clouds, nor any more shadows. So, by a short cut we leave the flowery dingles, and in less than five minutes we are in the heart of our parish, in very close contact with much that is offensive, even abhorrent, to both eye, and ear, and heart. We call part of this district "the Quarry," for it is built in an enormous stone quarry long since deserted; and, as might be expected, the cottages that have grown up, almost by accident, within it, have not been constructed with much regard to cleanliness or comfort, far less to external beauty. Here, by a sharp flight of broken steps, in the furrows of which the rain leaves eddying circles of black water, we get access to a line of low hovels, their walls of dingy, smoked brick, their broken panes stuffed with old rags, suggestive

of little that is decent or respectable within. Or, literally perched upon a lime-kiln, smoking and hot, we come upon a cluster of tumble-down cottages, that is to say, if we are not first knocked down ourselves by a rough troop of unbridled donkies, carrying sacks of coal from door to door.

The impression left on the mind after a walk through our parish is altogether one of unhappiness, of dark shadows of woe, and a general atmosphere of gloomy recklessness. Perhaps much of this is traceable to the nature of the work in which most of our poor men are engaged. They are employed in the numerous quarries, blasting, and mining, and boring the stubborn rock. For this they rise up early and late take rest, (often in the dark winter mornings they are abroad with their lanthorns by five o'clock) and at last earn but a scanty subsistence, contingent moreover, to a great extent, on weather and other accidents; and it is well known how a life of perpetual hazards is apt to issue in a living only for *to-day*, not in the Christian sense of quiet faith and trustful love, but in the heathen acceptance of the same doctrine, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." They look picturesquely odd, these quarrymen of ours, so very like Red Indians, as in an evening they stand in groups up and down the village street; for the curious red

clay of our soil dyes them and their clothes all over one strange shade of copper-colour; and one *pities* them too, for they look worn and weary, as if it were no light thing to *live*; and then one's eye wanders involuntarily to what must be the *end* of all, the little Churchyard lying below, its surface fast swelling with green graves and the rank luxuriance of that soil of mortality, and *can* we lay *these* there "in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection?" It may be that one by one they will be gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd, even as one by one, when least perhaps they knew it, diverse in age, and rank, and sex, His messengers have been among them, with calm faces, and firm hearts, and gentle ministries sowing their seed beside *all* waters, till wearied with their burden, the heavy burden of unkindness and slow-heartedness, as children of a King they were taken home to the Master whom they loved, and their works do follow them; though the *world* (seeing no *fruit* of their labours) said that they were "thrown away."

"Then I said, I have laboured in vain. I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain. Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

There was one poor cottage, endeared to us by these holy memories, and not less so because the

dove of heavenly peace always rested on the gentle features of the little boy who lived there. He had once been an Infant Scholar, bright and rosy, and rounded in form and limb. But at the age of five, he received such fearful injuries from a fall, that he was laid on his little bed, crippled and distorted in body, and his features so wasted by sickness, so white and transparent, that there was little of this world's vitality left in them, nor yet was there a chance of his ever exchanging that life of suffering and of absolute dependence upon others, till he should be carried to his grave. Perhaps we are all of us too apt to look upon suffering in the exclusive light of *punishment*, unmindful of our Lord's grave rebuke in the matter of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. Still, making every deduction that is due to our limited knowledge of the *reason* of things, there remains much that is very mysterious in the severe bodily pains often assigned to little children, who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Even the motto of our paper only states the *fact*, it does not supply the *reason*. *That* we must patiently leave sealed up in His bosom for whom the Holy Innocents were slain, and became thereby the types and first fruits to all ages, of infancy perfected by *suffering*, snow-white, undefiled, and fit to follow the Lamb

whithersoever He goeth : for in this overflowing and all-prevading sense,

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,”
Leads to the world where sorrow is unknown.”

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” and none of us can tell how early the heart of this little one was inclined to seek the Lord his God. It would rather seem that in his case the seed of baptismal grace was never lost, neither trodden under foot of men, nor decayed by his own carnal will and frailty. When he was yet an infant, a philosophic observer of physiognomy took him in his arms, and after looking at him carefully, remarked, “This child will either die early, or live to be something remarkable.” The prediction has been fulfilled in *both* its clauses, although perhaps the latter one was uttered in a widely different sense. But from the first his nature seemed to connect him more with heaven than earth, for whilst his great and uniform gentleness often led to the remark, “This child is too good to live,” it was noticed that even before he could walk or speak quite plainly, he would insist upon saying his little prayers many times a day, and his attentiveness at school was something so uncommon, that the clergyman put him with the elder boys long before the usual age. In reading, writing, and

Scripture knowledge he made such rapid advances, that the growth of his mind resembled that of the exotic flower, stimulated by invisible agencies. These favourite pursuits were suspended during several months of danger and acute agony that followed the accident which crippled him. After this period he entered upon what may be called his settled way of life, which continued till his death, last winter, at the end of four years. He could never bear to be dressed, but all summer long he lay in his little night-gown beside the open window, *exactly* as a favourite hymn of his own expresses it,

“I knew a little sickly child;
The long long summer's day,
When all the world was green and bright,
Alone in bed he lay.”

But for all his countenance was hollow and ghastly in its expression, no cloud of envy or discontent ever brooded there; on the contrary, as he watched the happy children at their play, he always looked patient and unaffectedly bright, as if on the watch for something to be pleased with. We often pass that casement now, and very sadly we miss the little loving face watching for our approach. The only comfort is to feel he is *quite safe*, gone where there are more like him than are left to us here, by no untravelled way, to no

undesired dwelling place. Sometimes, as we sat talking to him, a convulsive spasm would pass over his features. It was the only external sign he gave of the presence of the sharp pangs to which he was liable, and which often kept him awake most part of the night. Yet at times his sufferings were really *awful*, especially during those periods—sometimes protracted for many weeks—when the *abscesses* were forming. It was on one of these occasions that a departed clergyman, himself no stranger to acute bodily pain, expressed his surprise that a child could so lie in actual torment, and neither cry nor moan,—nothing, literally (except what his mother significantly called the “*squeezes up*,” the involuntary muscular convulsions of his little rent body,) betraying to others the agonies he was enduring. He said he could not bear his mother to know what he suffered, because it made her fret, and he could not bear her to be grieved. If she were ill or unhappy, she said she knew he was sure to be praying for her. “Mother,” he would say, “are you better now?” If she said “yes,” he would answer in the sweet simplicity of that faith which always takes God at His word, “I thought so; then my prayers are heard.”

“Come mother, does your head ache? Do come and lay it down by me, and let me make it

well." Then with his little wasted hands he would gently stroke her forehead, saying, "Oh mother, what *should* I do without you?"

If she wept at unkind remarks, directed sometimes against the harmless child himself, he would say, "Don't *never* mind them, mother. Be sure to pray for them, and then you will get *twice as large a blessing*." In every trouble she says he was her best comforter, and the loss is very grievous now.

Generally when we went in, he would pull out his Bible and hymn book, and say a long lesson. He had a great store of little books, which he kept in a tiny bookcase his father had made him, and all clean and nice as when they were first given him. It was the same with his toys, such as his favourite game of Turks and Russians, its miniature cannon and little banners, which a kind friend brought him from a distance. They are all put away now, having proved less fragile than their owner. His memory—stimulated no doubt, by incipient disease of the brain—was really *prodigious*. He would make nothing of saying three or four hymns, and a chapter in the Bible, without stopping, yet without a mistake; and this not in a careless or irreverent manner, but with a distinct solemnity that was itself *most* touching. It was eminently so, to hear this favourite hymn,

"The angels stand around Thy throne,"
And wait Thy bidding every one ;
Like stars around the full bright moon,
Or clouds beneath the setting sun.

Fair creatures, beautiful and bright,
They do the will of God on high ;
His ministers to us on earth
Unseen their white wings gliding by.

Lord, when *we* say "Thy will be done,"
May heart to lip be ever true ;—
Oh give us grace to serve Thee here
As gladly as the angels do.

And if Thou send us pain or grief,
If loss or anguish e'er befall ;
Still teach us, though with quivering lip
To say, "Thy will be done in all !"

Or when he repeated the Psalms, those beautiful Psalms, which brood over the green pastures and still waters of our home.

Still more affecting is it *now* to find his marks standing at the significant passages where some of his lessons closed for ever. As for instance, in his Catechism of the "Shadow of the Cross," stopping at the point where "Young Innocence, with her garments still white, is taken away from the garden;" or, in the ballad he was learning, still more abruptly at the maiden's death-bed and farewell.

"Then farewell all, and do not mourn"

For me when I am gone ;

There is a home with Christ for me,

And kind friends many a one.

And the last chapter he ever learnt—so close upon his death that it yet remains *unsaid*—was that part of the second chapter of S. Luke, which describes the presentation of Christ in the temple. It seems to have entered deep into his heart ; the holy embrace of the infant Saviour bringing to his two aged servants peace and salvation, and a golden glory to illuminate the dark places even of the valley of the shadow of death. "Oh mother," he kept saying, as he learnt it, "how beautiful! how *very* beautiful this is." "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

It was our great poet who said, at once in allusion to his own blindness and the comparative uselessness it entailed, and in beautiful illustration of the different ministries of angelic spirits,

"They also serve, who stand and *wait*."

So it was that our little sickly boy, in the silent reality of his daily sorrows and unfailing meekness, became transfigured to us as it were, into something a little lower than the angels, for he taught us what it is to say *indeed*, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

We are sorry to say that there *were* persons who (whether from mere thoughtlessness, or a vulgar inquisitiveness as to his inner life,) reiterated the unfeeling question, "Would you not like to be playing and running about like other children, instead of lying here a helpless cripple?" However, the prying indelicacy was uniformly baffled by the child's reply in modest, humble accents, "Oh no, I like to be as I am!" Indeed (if we may say it of one so lowly and so young) his mind was distinguished by a delicate sweetness, a pathetic tenderness of sentiment and manner, an innocent gladness attempered by sanctity, like the veiled beauty of the early morning.

Though Jemmy was of course unable to go to church, he had his own eloquent way of setting Sunday apart from common days. On that day he would not *learn* anything; it was his "rest."—With his Bible and Prayer-book, and gay illuminated pictures, he kept himself employed, or else he lay on his pillow, communing with his own heart, and was still. But all other days he was very busy, sometimes cutting out animals and flowers, or making cotton lace, or weaving beads into bracelets with pink and blue ribbon; or perhaps he would be reading a newspaper or a story book; but whatever it was, he always left on *your* mind the impression that *his* was too strong for its frail tenement.

He was so thoughtful too for all about him. On his mother's last birthday he brought out a hoarded sixpence to surprise his little brothers with a basket of eggs. If the baby was fretful, he would have it placed at the foot of his crib, put his kind arms round it, and coax it into quietness by every means in his power. One of his winning ways will never be forgotten by the friend it applied to. Having learned by accident that she was fond of flowers, he found means every week last summer to collect for her a bouquet of the loveliest roses, red, yellow, and white; looking all the while as if he was giving nothing, whereas in truth the act implied no little self-denial, for he was himself excessively fond of flowers.

Indeed he seemed marked out for early reflectiveness and early death; the idea was no strange nor sad one to himself. "Mother, if Lady — should come back, and find me still here, how surprised she will be," he said, in speaking of an absent friend. And again, with almost a presentiment of his end, he remarked a short time before his last illness, "I know mother, when I am gone, Miss — will do all she can for *you*." He was always very sensitive at parting with any of his friends. "Jemmy," said one of them, (and she never *did* see him again) "perhaps we shall not, *meet again* in this world, but you will pray for me *all the same*, will you not?" "Oh yes ma'am,"

he answered eagerly, and he kept his word; but for a long time he was very downcast at her absence. At last, when to a certain extent he felt her place supplied by the friend to whom she had entrusted this precious legacy, he remarked in his usual meditative way, "How good it is of God to raise me up another friend in dear Miss Y——'s place." He always made a point of praying for *all* his friends by name in a prayer of his own composing. I never heard that prayer myself, but I know that one of our clergymen, since called to his rest, was so overcome when he once overheard him saying it, that he burst into tears. Indeed, the words and ways of that child have often surprised me; but there is a text of Holy Scripture that explains it all. "I thank Thee, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

He always manifested a quick and lively sympathy in those who *suffered*, whether in mind or body. This noble trait was peculiarly called out in the case of a poor child his own age, who had been burnt, and was partially crippled in consequence. He used to send for Freddy, and then spread out all his wonderful toys to amuse him. It is remarkable that the two little friends died

within a few weeks of each other, and now lie side by side in our pretty churchyard.

"Mother," he said one day last winter, "I want to ask the clergyman if A——z is gone to heaven, but I can't make bold to speak it out." "Shall I ask him for you, Jemmy?" "Oh yes, do'ee mother." The answer was doubtful;—it must needs be so in most cases;—but it left poor Jemmy very sad and thoughtful.

About last autumn he seemed uncommonly anxious to get on with a quantity of crotchet edging. The needle was seldom out of his hands, and when I asked him how it was, he said that he wanted to *sell* it, because his parents were poor, and he was a great burden to them. Still, his very great eagerness puzzled me,—I fancied he must have some personal gain in his mind, and feared lest a taint of self and of covetousness still lingered within him:—nor, till after his death, did I know how deeply I had wronged him. It was just before his last illness that he one day astonished his mother by handing her the sum of ten shillings; this was what he had got together, the proceeds of his little earnings, during the last six months; and now, with a glad smile, he asked her to spend it in buying coal for the winter!

In strict accordance with this incident, it was discovered after his death that, unknown to any *body*, he had been paying small weekly sums

towards a purple morocco Prayer-book for his mother, which he intended to give her on her next birth day, a day he never lived to see; and when, the last Christmas day they spent together, his young sister found a bright sixpence concealed in her new pair of gloves, she had but to turn to her brother's flushed face, for *that* explained the puzzle.

Towards the end of the year I was absent for a short time. On my return, I found the little sufferer much as usual, anxious to hear of all the wonders I had seen in the Crystal Palace, and to compare my description with his pictures of it.

The next time I called after this, he was quite alone with his two little brothers. "I have learnt you a chapter, ma'am," he said, as he handed me his Bible, and then he repeated, word for word, that beautiful one in Revelations. "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude that no man could number, of all kindreds, and people, and nations, and tongues, stood before the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. And one of the elders said unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?"

The speaker and the hour were alike impressive; it was the dull fall of a misty November evening, and within the cottage no sound interrupted the deep stillness without, except the occasional *dropping of a red ember on the hearth. Nothing.*

save the clear thrilling accents of the child, speaking of that morning of beauty when "we shall be like *Him*, for we shall see Him as He is." And yet—I must confess it,—that looking at the sharpened, sunk lines of his face, and his body worn to skin and bone, it did feel very unlikely, almost like a fable, that *he* would have his part in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. But it made me most happy to think that it certainly *would* be so;—indeed, strange feelings passed through me at the time. I think *now* it might be the close contact with one whose feet already stood on the borders of the spirit world.

Soon after, when I again went to see him, I found him suffering from a terrible head-ache. It was a new feature in the catalogue of his pains, but he bore it with his accustomed serenity. He raised his little head with a smile from his pillow, saying he had learnt another chapter for me, and would say it "next time." But that "next time" is yet to come, I hope, in the Paradise of God, for his illness fast developed into an attack on the brain, and it became evident that his days were numbered. Lying in his mother's arms, for the most part unconscious, he sometimes opened his eyes with a look of intelligence, as he gazed on *features familiar to him, his mother's, or the clergyman he loved.* He had wished very much

to see a dove that his friend had promised to bring him, but when it came, it was too late for him to notice it. Yet a token more in keeping with that gentle child could hardly have visited his death-bed, of whom every remembrance is pure and precious, like the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold. "Mr.—Mr." was one of his latest words; he seemed as it were, to be *feeling* for that beloved name even in the mists of the dark river's margin. At other times, in brief intervals of consciousness, he composed himself to say his prayers, or begged his parents to forgive his moans, "I can't help it," he would say, "indeed I can't." Over his bed hung his favourite picture of the Good Shepherd bearing the wounded lamb on His shoulder. It was indeed as it should be, all both within and without; the pure white fleecy clouds sailing upwards, till they were lost in the depths of blue, all clothed in solemn stillness, like the sleep of the faithful. One night, the night he was dying, he all at once broke out into music. Perhaps he already caught the echo of those mysterious harpings, for it was perfect melody, like nothing he had ever sung before—we drew near to listen, but it was a song of the land to which he was going, which they only may learn who dwell there. It corresponded but too well with a bright and beautiful dream he had de-

cribed just before his last illness, in which he said he saw his friends weeping behind him, whilst far away he glided into light unspeakable, upon a calm and glassy sea, like the "crystal sea which is before the throne."

We went to look at him in his coffin. He lay there all in white, with a cross of pure white flowers upon his breast, the emblem no more to *him* of suffering, but henceforth his pledge and earnest of victory, for, as a very ancient writer has said, even so it was fulfilled in the life of this child, "If thou bear the Cross, the Cross will bear thee, and carry thee where shall be an end of suffering, though here there shall not be." No new sorrows or temptations could now assail him. He had been weary, but he was now at *rest*; and so refreshing was that rest, that all trace of his agonies seemed already done away, and he slept as one who enjoyed indeed the tranquillity of the night, but was all the time looking for the light and gladness of the morning.

He was buried on his tenth birth-day in our churchyard. A little green fir-tree is at present the only memorial which marks the place of his rest; but one more is added to the blessed memories which cluster there, and we bless God that one more walks in white before His throne, *and that the crown of our Redeemer has one jewel more.*

CHAPTER III.

SUDDEN DEATH.

—— A warning was denied.

How many fall as sudden, not as safe !

As sudden, though for years admonished home.

Beware, Lorenzo ! a slow sudden death !

YOUNG'S Night Thoughts.

"JEM, I've found out a job for us. Will'ee go over with me to the Folly, to fell one on 'em pollard oaks?"

The speaker was one of our poor men ; aboriginal both in his birth and in his calling, being from his childhood a labourer in our quarries, whose peculiar livery he wore, a fustian jacket and trousers dyed throughout in red clay. Both he and his friend looked lean and pinched and sallow, as the faces of poor people do look after a hard winter of dear fuel and food, and scanty clothing, during which they have in vain desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. But now, "the winter was past, the rain was over and gone; the flowers had appeared on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds was come." The "Folly" was an old round tower,

overhanging the woods and precipices that on one side terminate our Down. It had no history, no one could tell even who built it, although the date 1640, roughly carved over the portal, supplied something for conjecture to hang upon; and, as people *will* try to account for all queer things—perhaps from an intuition lying deeper than any logical conviction, that in spite of many appearances to the contrary, there *is* a law and order in this world which leaves nothing really unaccountable,—there were several romantic legends current as to the origin of the “Folly,” of which the following had received the best traditionary sanction. It was said that a high sheriff of Bristol, named John Cook, who lived in the reign of King Charles I., had been terrified by a vision which had announced to him that he would die, within the ensuing twelvemonth, by the bite of some poisonous animal. The idea was so frightful, that the very next day he commenced building a tower, consisting of two small rooms, one above the other, in which he proceeded to enclose himself till the ominous term should have expired. The story proceeds, that only a few days before the end of his voluntary imprisonment, a serpent, which had been drawn up unperceived in a basket of firewood, crawled out while he was asleep, and gave the *dream its fatal fulfilment*. We do not ask any one

to believe this modest little concretion of improbabilities; at the same time, we have no better explanation to give either of the existence of the tower itself, nor yet of its mysterious title, "Cook's Folly." In our own eyes it embodied no sort of connection with the past, but rather it stood out as an enchanted spot of present, and most exquisite loveliness; that solitary, strong grey tower, upon a beetling rock, the rough sides of which were concealed, as they sloped downwards to the water's edge, by copses and magical thickets of young oaks and ilex and hazles, with fairy footsteps beneath them, strewn in primroses and wood anemones, and overspread in summer by a filagree network of clematis and wild blush roses. The opposite banks rose abruptly with the same crown of emerald and flowers, but broken here and there by layers of grey rock bright with ivy and lichens, and by the shafts for the stone quarries, the bare sides of which were shaded like veined marbles, in delicate streaks of buff and pink. Between these banks the river rolled, broad and slow, and, as the poet says of the river of death, "with a sorrowful, deep sound;" and the view was closed upwards by the distant sea and the Welsh hills of violet blue. It wore its very loveliest face the day we are speaking of. The beech woods of Blaise Castle had put on that ruddy hue which even so far back

as the days of Virgil was accepted as a sure concomitant of spring, and all the rest, in its first and tenderest green, looked indeed very good, seen through the silver-like haze of that fair morning.

I do not suppose our labourers thought much of all this though. Theirs was no position for sentiment, and their task was only a rough reality, to hew down one of the largest trees in the wood. But they set about it cheerfully and thankfully, as that which would bring bread for their children. When the trunk was rather more than half sawn through, just enough being left untouched to support it for awhile, they sat down to eat their dinners upon a mossy bank close by, on which the violets were very thickly clustering. Flowers too beautiful to adorn an open grave. There was a momentary whisper in the topmost boughs of the tree; then two or three leaves fell; the poor men saw it, and started to their feet; but already it had bowed and shivered, and with one awful crack it fell upon them both.

"If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north; in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." Words significant alike of it and of them. The one was taken up dead, the other with the life so crushed out of him, that he died soon after in our Infirmary.

"From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us,"

meets a responsive echo in the depths of each heart; we connect something awful, even judicial, with an instantaneous, or a violent death. And survivors cling so desperately to the "last words" of the dying, as if there went virtue out of them, that these have come to be regarded as a necessary part of every religious biography, without which the rest would seem fragmentary and unsatisfying. However, it is remarkable what small account the Bible makes of the mode of any one's death. Some of its brightest characters died by violent, or as we should call them, horrible deaths. Huldah, the prophetess, foretold to Josiah that he should come to his grave "*in peace*;" and yet, strangest of paradoxes, he met a bloody death in battle! And of those who died, as we phrase it, "peacefully in their beds," some, like David, pass before us in something very like the dotage of old age. There are no death-bed scenes—no halo round the setting sun; and beautiful as the wish is, it was no prophet of the Lord who uttered it, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." For not by momentary flashes of the expiring lamp shall we be judged, nor may we judge others; and therefore, putting far from us all heathenish notion of *vengeance* in connection with such as "those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell," may we pray in

the words of a Liturgy still older than our own, "From sudden and *unprovided death*, good Lord, deliver us." Living, or dying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and then certainly it will be all right, all just as it should be, whatever be the mode of our departing, in whatever manner we be taken home, whether by sickness we die the common death of all men, or be carried away as it were by a whirlwind into heaven.

There is a solitary spot in one corner of our churchyard, under the dank shadow of a tree, the knotted roots of which run below the road. It looked so cold and dark that no one would lie there, nor lay their friends underneath it. But now, by a sort of instinct, it was chosen as the fittest resting place for the two who had perished; and when, under its most sorrowful shadow, we think pitifully of *them*, still more earnestly do we repeat the petition for *ourselves*, "From unprovided death, good Lord, deliver us!"

CHAPTER IV.

AN EARLY ROSE.

Oh say not, dream not, heavenly notes
To childish ears are vain ;
That the young mind at random floats,
And cannot reach the strain.

Dim or unheard, the words may fall,
And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred strain, and all
The harmony unwind.

Christian Year. "Catechism."

I HAVE often thought that of all religious duties, not strictly domestic, that fall in one's way, that connected with the parish schools is by far the pleasantest. Of course one meets there with the average of childhood's faults, idleness, levity, and self-will ; for children are not "little angels," as some persons fondly fancy ; but still it is not like being with grown-up people. Their faces have not had time to gather blackness through long exposure to this world's foul and withering air : they have not repeatedly and deliberately sinned against all that they knew and felt to be God's will speaking within them ; and they understand as none that

are sin-defiled can understand, what is holy and good, because they come nearer to it; "for in heaven their angels do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven."

To my school it was a long, but very pleasant walk, leading for about a mile through a succession of fields that were intersected by hedges, and here and there studded by giant elm trees. Those fields were always beautiful, from the warm spring days when they sheltered the first blue bells of the year, onwards through the fragrant weeks of May blossom and briar roses, till the russet leaves fell and made rapid way for the pure calm snow to cover them like a pall of innocence. And yet that glistening snow used to call up in my mind very painful thoughts about the little ones to whom I was going, for all through the fields it lay in one unbroken sheet of stainless white, like their baptismal state of grace and blessedness; but as soon as ever I passed the last rustic stile, and approached the habitations of man, *man*, (alas that it should be so!) became as usual associated with *guilt*,—many footsteps had broken the smoothness and sullied the purity of my way; and when I looked on the coarse fierce faces that swarmed all round, my heart would often die within me as I traced the *sad* likeness to what my poor children must soon *be exposed to, and waywardly reverse our holy*

Redeemer's prayer, and ask *not* that they "should be kept from the evil," but that they "should be taken" early "out of the world."

However it was a pretty sight that always met me as I lifted the school house latch. A circle of about twenty children, so very bright and smiling, they looked like little living lilies and roses, and every one had a curtsy or perhaps a bunch of flowers for "teacher." One likes, in worldly phrase, to "*see something for one's pains*;" and I am afraid I was too apt to notice the quick reply which after all only shewed that the understanding had caught up my meaning, forgetting the while, that God's foundation stones are laid in depth and silence. "Make a few saints," was the advice of one who well knew what he said, when he was called upon to say what occurred to him as the mark and standard of success in education; and the making of saints is of course a hidden work.

There was one little girl, however, who completely baffled all my prying into results. "You will get nothing out of her," said the vicar; and certainly I never was able to extort so much as a single answer from her. Yet she was a child of singular interest. They called her "Rose," and rightly was she named so, for she was very fair and beautiful, with dark blue eyes and curling chesnut hair, and a lovely colour that came and

went whenever you spoke to her, as if in blushing agreement with her name. Moreover she was fatherless, and of better parentage than any of our other children; but her mother had trusted her amongst us, for as the white lily derives its loveliness and perfume from the same black mud which continual washing cannot cleanse, and out of which the yellow lily sucks its noisome odour and fetid existence, so some persons assimilate to themselves only what is ugly and evil from the same moral circumstances which supply good and beautiful results—the fragrance of heavenly flowers—to the daily life of others. And thus, as our little Rose shrank from the bold words and rough touch of the other children, and sought to be much alone, we only said that she was shy and sensitive, for we could not *see*, and therefore, like S. Thomas, did not *believe* that the Lord had called the child, who grew up before Him as a tender plant, softly and in silence, till He should come into His garden, to gather the lilies. She was but ten years of age when she was cut down by a mortal sickness which only lasted a few days; but at her death-bed we wondered, and drew near to behold, for then indeed,

“The Saviour *felt*, not *seen*, in life,
Deigned to be *seen* in that last strife.”

Peace unutterable was with the blessed child;

there may be peace to the penitent at the eleventh hour; there is peace to the wayward returner from the sins of middle life; but there is no peace promised, and none bestowed, so perfect, so holy, so deep and unspeakable, as the peace vouchsafed to those who have remembered their Creator in the days of their youth.

We asked her if she was afraid to die? "Oh no," she answered, with the smile of victory already on her brow, "I am going to my Saviour, and you will soon follow me there."

Yes, the early dead, *they* recognise the "communion of saints" as our sin-beclouded eyes cannot do. She sent tokens and messages of love to those she had known, as one about to go home, not to die, or to be far distant. "Lord Jesus, feed me, and wash me in Thy precious blood," was the sacramental prayer we heard her whisper in the night, when she thought nobody was near. Soon after, patient but weary, she asked to lean once more upon her mother's breast; and in that very action, so full of mysterious meaning to us all, her gentle spirit departed. With her garments still white, she had passed away from amongst us. She died early; but who shall say she therefore died untimely? Oh rather be it ours to remember, that "thus youth that is soon perfected shall condemn the many years and old age of the ungodly"

"WHEN I WAS YOUNG."

Forget "the days when I was young?" that brightest,
loveliest time,—

That morning dream, ere being woke to sorrow or to
crime,—

Its cloudless morns, its purple eves, its never-fading
flowers;

How oft I sit and sigh in vain for one of those bright hours!

I loved those spotless flowers below, those glorious stars
above,

Kind, holy friends were they to me.—I sought not *human*
love;

Then faith was real, and hope was strong, I asked not
how or *why*;

I *felt* a guardian angel near, a heavenly Father by.

The nights they seemed too long for rest, the days too
short for play,—

They said 'twould not be always thus, as life should pass
away;

They spoke of summer's parching heat, of winter's cold
and snow,—

Alas! I knew fair nature's face, its *lessons* did not know!

Too soon I left the child-like way, the path by angels
trod,

To pierce my bleeding feet with thorns mine own self-
will had sowed;

Then came the ghosts of blessings spent, the demons of
past years,

The dusty day for toil too short, the bitter night for tears.

Scarce dare I gaze upon the stars, or mid the flowerets be,
The holy with the holy suits, but never more with me;
No more I see the white-winged guide, nor hear his
angel song;—
Oh, would that I had ne'er outlived “the days when I
was young !”

CHAPTER V.

SELF - MURDER.

That day of wrath, that dreadful day
When heaven and earth shall pass away;
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll :—
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead.

Oh in that day, that awful day
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be Thou the trembling sinner's stay,
When heaven and earth shall pass away.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

It was May morning; and all looked unspeakably bright and happy. A thin silvery-grey haze that lingered, spirit-like in its departings, upon the woods, and parks, and emerald hills, did but serve to make everything more beautiful. For veiled by it, not concealed, the delicate hues of innumerable spring flowers blended with the soft showery sky, in the same unstudied harmony that subsists *between the golden suns and gorgeous foliage of*

autumn. According to the custom of the south, there were knots of gaily-dressed children up and down the lanes, carrying wreaths of lilac, and pink May blossoms; and there were old men leaning on their staves, who wished the passers by that long life which had proved but labour and sorrow to themselves.

Musing on this common paradox, my ear caught the sound of wheels, and presently a gallant equipage swept by, drawn at full gallop by four milk-white horses, their heads proudly arched with red and white roses. Within, I caught but a glimpse, or rather a gleam, of lace, and flowers, and beauty. And then it was gone—did my ears deceive me? again there was the tramp of horses; but this time it was a dull, heavy tread, and no salute was exchanged as these passed the other, for they were the black horses of death, and they were bearing a man to his long home in all that ironical pomp of woe which is perhaps the most terrible satire ever devised by humanity on itself. However, I followed the bridal party, for I wanted to see who could be bold enough to wed in the ill-omened month of May. The Church was well filled, for it was a beautiful wedding. Young, handsome, and gracious; I shall not linger over the silky tresses and orange flowers of the bride, the noble presence of her bridegroom, nor those lovely bridesmaids,

between girlhood and womanhood, light figures in white muslin and transparent bonnets, more exquisite flowers than those they held in their hands. All *that* indeed would make a very pretty paragraph for the newspapers, but the reality of it all seemed compressed into the prayer, that they might *so* live together in this life, that in the world to come they might have life everlasting.

On leaving the Church, I asked the name of the gentleman? It happened to be the name of one who had long been reputed as engaged to a neighbour, not a friend, of ours: but *she* was not his bride; and my next question seemed anticipated by the voluntary remark, "They say he was to have married another, but they fell out about something, and it was broken off; and *this* match was made up in no time; but they say marriages are made in heaven, and so no doubt it's all for the best." It might be so; I tried to think it *was* so; but man's optimism is such a poor sorry thing, such a mere shuffling evasion of obvious natural consequences, by the substitution of words for facts, that I found myself thinking often that day of the forsaken betrothed, wondering how she felt, and whether *she* thought it was "all for the best:"—not so much, I mean, in the way of actual or protracted thought, but just in that haunting, worrying sort of way, as if it were forced upon one by

some personal, though invisible, being. And that evening my feet turned instinctively towards the large garden at the back of her house, to which I was allowed ingress by a private key. It was one of those foolish natural impulses, as if nearness to the person implies communion of the heart,—sense the avenue to spirit. Now this garden was chiefly kept up for old-fashioned herbs and vegetables, gooseberry and currant bushes, southernwood and parsley and pale rosemary, in little fantastic rings and borders. There was a pond at the lower end of still, deep water, where the wild pimpermels reflected their scarlet flowers in the clear stream; this was employed for watering the garden, but one did not see it at first, for the approach to it was by a descent of about a dozen steps, and concealed by rockwork festooned with ivy and periwinkle. This evening, contrary to my usual custom, I had entered the garden from the other end; and in passing down the middle, I observed that the drawing-room window of the house where Miss * * * * lived, was wide open to the ground, which indeed was very natural, for it was a close night, although so damp and clammy that the dew hung like pearls upon every leaf and blade of grass. I had approached within a few yards of the pool, when I perceived a number of persons bending over it, and speaking below their voices.

But one of them had caught sight of me, and a cry of "Go back, go back, for God's sake," broke forth from several of them. I knew it must be some merciful instinct which uttered the warning; but impelled by that desperate courage which must needs know the worst, I stood where I was—I did not, for indeed I *could* not, move. What followed is almost too horrible to tell. The people passed close by me, bearing in their arms, in thin and dripping white garments, the lifeless corpse of that most unhappy woman. In the lowest depths of her heart she had echoed the exceeding bitter cry, "Ye have taken away my *gods*, and what have I more?" And she had dared to die, who would not dare to live. Oh well might "the Pilgrims say to each other, We have need to cry unto the Strong for strength:"*—and unspeakably terrible is it thus to die and make no sign.

Appalling visions haunt me whenever I look upon the grave where she was laid, in the gloom of twilight, when the pale death moths wander over the tops of the long and seedy grass that seems purposely to conceal the stone from sight, unowned and nameless as it is. Nor from such is there any remission, except in the ocean of God's unmeasured love, outlying and transcending even

* *Pilgrim's Progress.*

His known and covenanted mercies. *We* need not strike the balance between moral guilt and madness. When Saul, the suicide, had fallen on his sword on Mount Gilboa, David took up a lamentation for him, recalling only the "lovely and pleasant" moments of a life which had been darkened by many shadows, defiled by many crimes. These he willingly selected as the harmonies of that better existence which God had imparted, and which, therefore, all that is of the dust and of the devil could not wholly decay or destroy. And *we* will follow his example, and in no way of presumptuous excuses for our own shortcomings, but to aid our merciful judgment and peaceful memory of the departed, we will be content, yea delight, to lose ourselves and all our miserable fears, in those measureless heights and depths of love illimitable, wherein alone without fear we may be lost, and exult to be so lost.

"Abide with us; for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent."—S. LUKE xxiv. 29.

Darker and sadder fleets my little day,
Its joys are seldom, but its sorrows stay;
In daily pressure of dull agony,
Friend of the stricken, still abide with me!

Not like a stranger guest, to come and go
In fitful gleams of feeling's changeful flow;
But dwelling always where I am to be,
Oh thus, most blessed Lord, abide with me!

Yea, much I need Thee on my lonely way,
Where truth is fallen, and love may not stay;
And foes assault when least I can foresee,
Nor ever *need* I—if Thou dwell with me.

Oh there are strong temptations, thrilling fears,
Voiceless, unspeakable to mortal ears;
Deep in my heart's dark places where they flee—
I am *alone*, unless Thou dwell with me!

Death will come soon, with terrors on his brow;
But still, when Death is near, be nearer Thou!
May they who then my dying features see,
This knowledge take, that I have been with Thee.

Then white, immaculate, to pass away
From twilight shadows into tearless day;
Crowned and beatified, Thy face to see,
Thus shall it be, *at last*, to dwell with Thee!

CHAPTER VI.

OUR INNOCENTS.

"They brought young children to Christ, that He should touch them."

"And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them."

There is a reaper, whose name is Death,
And, with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

"Shall I have nought that is fair?" saith he;
"Have nought but the bearded grain?
Though the breath of these flowers is sweet to me,
I will give them all back again."

He gazed at the flowers with tearful eyes,
He kissed their drooping leaves;
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He bound them in his sheaves.

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"
The Reaper said, and smiled;
"Dear tokens of the earth are they,
Where He was once a child."

They shall all bloom in fields of light,
Transplanted by My care;
And saints, upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear.

O, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day.
'Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And took the flowers away.

LONGFELLOW.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."—S. Matt. xviii. 10.

PERHAPS it is impossible for us, in our present state of imperfect knowledge, to apprehend the full and precise meaning of these words of our Lord. Yet by the warning which rests on them, we know they are no figure, but full of reality, for a warning can be founded on a *reality* alone ; nor less than this can we deem of them, that He who ever manifests Himself to us as greatest in the least, has constituted the services of angels and men in an order so wonderful, that from where within the emerald bow, in a light of brilliance unutterable, the elders of creation are gathered, each on his throne, clothed in white raiment, and having on their heads the golden crowns of arch-angels, whispering and winged voices proceed *direct*, not as they arrive at *us*, in the incarnate weakness of earthly mediums and imperfect imaginings, but, where alone their strong simplicity is sure of no incredulous welcome, to the soft, trusting heart of a little child.

Thus much has been said to strengthen our own assertion, that the circumstances we are about to state, are, in the most literal sense, *true*.

At the top of the precipitous flight of stone

steps, with houses projected upon them, and perched somewhat like nests built upon a ladder, by which we descend from the upper to the lower village, there are two or three cottages which slant backward, as it were, into comparative retirement. The approach to them is by a private foot-way, and they have green wicket gates that enclose small patches of garden in front, neatly hedged in with box and London-pride; so warm and sheltered indeed are they, that those early favourites of the poor (perhaps their favourites, because like themselves, they will bear cold and pinching,) such as the sky-blue hepatica, the double-button lilac primrose, and the old-fashioned polyanthus, claret spotted with yellow, constantly shew themselves, before their season, in these mild spots. At the time of which I am now writing—a few years back—one of these cottages was occupied by a married couple, who were well spoken of by all the neighbours round. The man was a labourer, very honest and sober, and his gentle-tempered, civil-spoken wife added to his small wages by taking in washing. As the poor say, “they kept themselves *to* themselves,” for they were very domestic, and happy in each other, but above all things, they were proud of their children. Of these the eldest was pale and sickly, stunted in his growth and lame from a fall, and he was in the charge of a kind grandmother; but

the other three were children to be proud of, beautiful in form and fair in countenance, with lustrous hazle eyes, and white skins that were sometimes flushed with almost *too* rich a crimson, such as our old people say is the mark of incipient consumption. Billy was ten years of age, docile and beloved at our parish school; really, for his age, what his parents called him, "a great scholar." James was just five; and little Lizzie not quite out of her mother's arms.

This year the spring and summer had been so cold and wet, that the earth seemed unable to mature her fruits; nor were the autumn winds strong enough to purify the air, or to dry up the stagnant vapours which exhaled from the soaked earth; so that the month of November was marked by thick suffocating fogs, alternating with downfalls of drizzling rain. It is manifest that such a "fall" must have been most unhealthy, and our parish was not long exempt from its baneful influences. Scarlet fever broke out, and that in so very malignant a form, that the fear of death fell upon all, which of itself did but serve to quicken and develope the pestilence. Our Church seemed fuller then than usual, for some prayed there who never prayed before, pouring out a prayer when the chastening was upon them; others, with a *more apparent and less subtle selfishness*, crept

close together, and lived as much as they could indoors, in unloving isolation from their suffering friends: they made fast, as it were, their doors, but it was all in vain; they could not keep out the evil angels that were among them.

I do not think that the little household of whom I write attempted any such faithless precautions; therefore every one pitied them the more when the baby fell ill of the fever; for a few days the new-born life that was within her did hard battle with the disease; but the contest was too unequal. The once round and dimpled limbs, now stiffened and discoloured, were laid in the little grey coffin, and to her the victory without peril was given. When baby died, they were afraid to tell Billy, for he loved her very dearly, so that people used to remark in the way of wonder, how he "was taken up" with her: when he returned from school that day, and found that she was really dead, he turned ashy pale, and said with a sort of cold shiver, "Mother, I know it will be the death of me. I am sure I shall soon go to our Lizzie." "Would you *like* to go to Lizzie, then?" said she. Billy did not answer; he seemed communing with his heart, as if trying to decipher his own feelings; but little Jamie, who was by, spoke up at once, with all the innocent joyfulness of his clear, bell-like voice,— "Go to Lizzie! Oh, I should like to

go to our Lizzie, where she is, up in heaven! I *should* like it very much indeed!’

No more was said, and two days passed as usual; on the third morning Billy came to school with his throat bandaged up in a piece of flannel; he said it felt like great lumps in it, and that it was so sore, it hurt him to swallow. The poor have no time for nervous fancies, nor are they quick to notice first symptoms, but the master had his own thoughts, and walked up after school on purpose to tell his mother that Billy had better be kept at home for a day or two; however, he found her absent; she had been obliged to set off to see her aged father, who had been seized with sudden illness at a village about three miles distant, and she had taken little Jamie along with her. It had been raining hard all the morning, but had now partly cleared up; the setting sun looked out with a faint smile, sickly and yellow, from between a misty covering of thin clouds that were rapidly condensing into fog, as they met and caught up the vapours from the steaming ground. The ditches all along the roadside were choked with fallen leaves; and swarms of diminutive ill-omened flies whirled about, annoying the eyesight; whilst innumerable black-horned snails had crawled out to enjoy the unwholesome moisture, acceptable to *none but them*. Only in one part did the way

look anything like cheerful, and that was where it was skirted for about half a mile by thick woods composed chiefly of evergreens, such as fir, and holly, and laurels, but above all, of gigantic arbutus, which were covered at this season with their lily-like blossoms, and also, as their manner is, at one and the same time, by pendent clusters of fruit in all its stages, varying in colour from pale green through every shade of orange and golden, down to brilliant scarlet and deep purple-red. This was a famous cover for game, and little Jamie was delighted to see the proud pheasants gliding about, and the brown hares peeping from the thickets. He had been bounding along, talking merrily to them and to himself, when all at once he ran back to his mother, and caught her by her gown.

"Mother," he said, "suppose our Lizzie's gone to *bespeak a place for me!*"

"Whatever do you mean, child," she answered, "to bespeak a place for *you?* and *where?*"

"*In heaven, mother,*" he answered, quite soberly.

Poor thing! She had time enough afterwards to ponder these things in her heart, but not now. When they got home, her husband met her at the door.

"I've been awaiting for you," he said; "I've put Billy to bed; his throat is so bad he can't eat

nothing, and his face is red and inflamed like. I'll just step down for the doctor now you're back. Please God it ben't *the fever* !"

But it *was* the fever ; there was no doubt about *that* ; the doctor said so, the minute he came in.

He was kept in bed, and we waited anxiously for the third day, the crisis of the complaint ; that day brought with it no very perceptible change, except that his mind, from a state of simple unconsciousness, began slightly to wander. Once more the mother's thoughts were painfully diverted, for that evening little Jamie fell fainting on her lap, and on the morrow, the fatal rash appeared. From the very first there was small hope of *his* recovery, for the disease came upon him like a strong man armed, overpowering at once both his strength and his consciousness. He was but four days ill altogether, and at the last, as he lay panting on his mother's breast, with his arms about her neck, she could not help exclaiming in the bitterness of her heart, "My dear, dear boy, if you might but get well again, how I *would* love you !"

"Love,—love—love me," said the child, with dying sweetness, looking upward. These were the last words he uttered. The neighbours were much too frightened to come near, and so by

themselves and unassisted the broken-hearted parents laid out the little corpse, and then returned sadly to keep their night-watch beside the exhausted form of his brother. The fever had quite left him; he looked wan, and shivered slightly, as if he felt the icy fingers of death laid upon him, and shrunk from their first cold touch. He had scarcely spoken since he was taken ill, but now he slowly opened his still beautiful eyes. "Oh Lizzie, Lizzie, how lovely you are! do come into my arms, my own, my darling Lizzie," and he opened wide his arms, as if about to embrace and hold fast something, but the effort was too much for him, and they fell powerless at his side. It was twilight fast growing into dusk, when he again spoke. "Father—mother—are you there? I thought I had got Lizzie—wings—brightness—where am I? Oh mother, the place is all bright and shiny—see, the light is coming upon everything, now it is shining on you. Look—can't you see it, mother?" Of course *she* could not see it, that which none but dying eyes *could* see, but her tears fell over him like rain. "Dear mother, don't—don't 'ee cry,—it does hurt me to see you take on so." She tried to stifle her sobs, and to make it appear that she was not crying. "Yes, mother," he said, "indeed you *are* crying—and you mustn't grieve for *me*, mother, I am going to

a better place, to heaven, mother dear." There was another silence, and then he said, "mother, I *must* see Jamie before I die. Will you and father bring him in for me to look at? I want to see him how he looks in his coffin, and how nice we shall lie in the grave, both of us together." Exhausted as they were with grief and watching, the poor parents strove to gratify this strange request, and between them they lifted in the coffin which contained the mortal part of little Jamie. His brother looked at it long with a deep and loving interest; he just gathered up strength to kiss the waxen brow, and then he thanked his father and mother, and lay down again quite satisfied. His hands were clasped, and his eyes looked towards the east, upon which, after sun-setting, a golden fringe rested. There on the morrow, his home would be. *What* he saw there it is not given to us to know, (but the experience both of medical men and of others who are accustomed to watch over death-beds, attests this point, that spiritual appearances, and these of *two* sorts, are wont to be in attendance on the dying.)

Perhaps the gates of his Father's House were open, and he could see the glory through them. And still, as the night drew on, he lay, not so much changed, as transfigured; his eye and his *ear taken up with visions and with voices.* At

last there fell a deeper stillness, a shadow seemed to move along the wall; and Death was come and gone; for oh, he can indeed appear very gentle.

“They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.” Close to the grave we have last opened, but in an all-blessed contrast of remembrance, we buried these three little ones together, whom surely Jesus beholding had loved. And together too, they will rise again: and then their’s shall be garments of white, and glistening, so as no fuller on earth can white them.

CHAPTER VII.

MINISTERING ANGELS.

The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest;
The truest wisdom there, and noblest art,
Is his, who skills of comfort best;
Whom, by the softest step and gentlest tone,
Enfeebled spirits own,
And love to raise the languid eye,
When, like an angel's wing, they *feel* him fleeting by.
Christian Year. S. Barnabas.

VERY cross and most unreasonable was Mrs. Jones—at least I thought so—as, with her arms bubbling up to the elbows in soap suds, and pounding and poking with all her might, in a sort of illustrative way, the wet things in the wash tub before her, she gave me a peremptory exposition of her notions of school discipline and order. She “should take her child away—that she should, for they didn’t learn nothing at them schools; and the missus was *that stupid*,”—an expressive epithet which I was at the moment privately applying to the speaker herself, when the door of the cottage was opened, unperceived by either of us, and the

figure of a lady glided, rather than passed, by us;—she was tall and slender, and simply dressed in a grey cloth cloak and a coarse straw bonnet trimmed with a ribbon of dark blue; but there was in her movements that grace and almost musical harmony which one associates with refinement of race or of feeling, with the idea of a *lady* in its complete and most restricted sense. All at once she turned full round, and in doing so, revealed a face of exquisite beauty; features so delicate and white, they might have been chiselled out of ivory, a brow like what old painters used to give to their saints, and dark brown eyes, clear, soft, and almond-shaped, such as often go with gentle blood. She did but pause to ask a question, kindly in form and gentle in voice, about the poor cripple who lodged above, and then she passed on upstairs. “That’s *the lady*,” presently said the gruff Mrs. Jones, but in an altered tone that betokened how oil had been insensibly poured on the troubled waters. “I reckon,” she added, “she’s been and brought something nice in her basket for the poor sick body overhead.” In Germany they believe that any sudden, unaccountable pause in a conversation is occasioned by the passage through the company of a ministering angel, and certainly there was something on the present occasion near akin in its effects to such a softening presence.

"She's a *real* lady; one who cares for us poor people; I'll ax *her* what she thinks about Susan, and then I let you know, ma'am," said Mrs. Jones.

It was my first meeting with one—thank God, we had more than one of them amongst us then—one dearly loved and better known hereafter, whom to know was indeed, in every sense, to love.

In spite of the eloquent fact, that God manifest in the flesh lived entirely with the poor of this world, it has come to be thought so great a sacrifice of our time, so rude a shock to our taste and delicate nerves, (which we mistake for fine feelings) to visit poor people at all, that it sounds almost an ungracious thing to find fault with the *manner* in which such a disagreeable duty—to call it a *privilege* would be out of the question—is performed by the few who do acknowledge its responsibilities. And yet, without some attention to this point, visiting the poor in their own homes, will only tend to widen the breach and quicken the alienation which already too evidently exists between the rich and the poor, at least in our collective capacity. It will inevitably do this, if in our intercourse with them we go roughshod over their old-fashioned prejudices, their harmless superstitions, their decent self-respect; our economical views of how they "ought" to live, and to die, and to be buried, thrust upon them in tones of

clamorous advice; that "advice gratis" which no one can endure, and which we dare not offer to our equals. But then, "surely these are poor; they are foolish;" and so we may say "plain things" to them, and take all sorts of liberties, such as intruding at their meal times, interfering impertinently with their dress; and, what they feel most of all, taking no account of their *feelings*; if, indeed, we do not think, (perhaps we should not quite *say* it) that they have no right to have any. And if it be hinted to us that the Bible calls them our brethren, our bone and our flesh, then we mutter something about the Bible not being intended to teach political economy, and about keeping the poor in their *proper place*; or we evade the whole question by a jeremiad on the degeneracy of the times, implying a lurking preference for those of serfdom and of slavery.

It is worse, when in visiting the poor, we think we must be always "sowing seed," talking the Bible in a lecturing way, or assume a tone which implies our desire to impart our graces to them; and tenfold worse is it than all, when, in our *religious* intercourse with them, we contrive to imbue them with systems and notions, with those vague generalities concerning awful truths which sometimes stultify, sometimes harden the heart. The English poor have no leaning towards theory and

speculation; it is all against their natural bent if we force them into it. They want, what we all want; but they, the desolate and oppressed, most above all others, a Personal Being to love and to trust in, to be their Guide and Counsellor, to keep them in all their ways. Unless we impart to them the reality of *this*, we impart to them nothing worth having, at least not to them, to whom truth must be not abstract, but embodied.

Of course it is not meant that everybody can have the same happy tact and nicety of observation as those to whom sympathy has been a gift rather than a laborious acquirement, that which feels rather than perceives how always to say the right thing in the right way; but we *can* all of us start from the point laid down by a very keen observer of mankind,* and, assuming a general similarity in human nature however circumstanced, can avoid saying to the poor what we feel would be, if we were placed in their circumstances, disagreeable to ourselves; and we *can* interest ourselves in those things, which, however petty in themselves, yet do manifestly interest *them*, such as their little possessions, their flowers and furniture, their bodily infirmities, and their domestic relations.

Those of whom we are speaking made it worth their while to attend to all this. In *their* visits

* Lord Chesterfield.

was no noise, nor impertinence, nor bustle; they always let the poor have their time, and thought it no waste of their own to sit down and listen, it might be, even by the hour, to those details, prolix and tedious, in which alone the unskilled in language can communicate their burdens; for if the poor are to tell their tale at all, they must be allowed to tell it in their own way, and not "cut short," as the phrase is, in order that we may be set at liberty to be doing something else, which we fancy more important, measuring, in a commercial way, the outpourings of grief by clock-work. And the children of consolation have their reward; for it is given them to see and to delight in the generosity, the self-devotion, the trustful loving nature and firm heart with which the poor meet us when they *see* that we love them; for there is no kindness like their kindness; and *we* need the contact far more than they do, if we did but know it. It was in a close and stuffy room that our title was suggested, for it was there that the poor inmate said, "Oh, as I watched their lovely faces, reading to me from the Bible, I thought it must be just like the face of an angel!" Over such as they disappointment has no power; it suggests no virtuous declamation about the ingratitude of the poor, or of "lost labour," and "pains thrown away," for they who thus follow Him who does

"not make haste" have entered into that divine philosophy so exquisitely expressed,—and are

"Anxious less to *serve* Thee much
Than to *please* Thee perfectly."

Content to cast their bread upon the waters, in hope to find it after many days; or, it may be, to stand on higher ground still, and to sow, like God Himself, in *waste*. And, yielding themselves up so cheerfully to do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven, it awoke strange hard thoughts within us, when these daughters of music were brought low. *They* had been no "delicate members of a thorn-crowned Head;" on the contrary, wherever they had seen the print of His foot, there they had desired to set theirs also; possessing, amidst ease and luxury and earthly allurements, the "heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathize." Yet it was for these that the furnace was heated one sevenfold more than it was wont to be heated, for it pleased the Lord to afflict them. A fact not to be accounted for by us, except on the faith of that mysterious law by which humanity must needs be perfected through suffering, and at the same time, a twofold end secured, by which the sufferers themselves go forth with that balm which is as ointment of spikenard, very precious, and which

"Only those, by sufferings tried,
Bear to a suffering brother's side."

But of what is too near and too sacred this only would we say, that *they* would not have had it otherwise; and as, in the sable garments of affliction they went up and down our streets and lanes, they chose out more and more the most heart-broken among mourners, the vilest among sinners, for they took Him at His word who had bid them go forth weeping, bearing precious seed; and surely for this end especially, to bind up the broken-hearted. "When the eye saw them, then it blessed them; and when the ear heard them, it gave witness unto them." While they were here, they seemed to us like tall white lilies beside the still river of the water of life: and they will come again with joy, and bring their sheaves with them; for they bartered what they had in this world for the widow's gratitude, the orphan's prayer, and the poor man's love; and in going hence, these riches will follow them to the gates of the glorious city. But a more abundant treasure, a perfect harmony, and a light of brilliance unapproachable, await them *there*.

"Him that overcometh, the same shall be clothed with white raiment."

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

To walk in mournful shadows here, nor seek an earthly home,

To see our blessed ones depart, nor grudge to be alone;
Or worse, their weariness to mark, to see them go astray,
Where with them we may never walk, unless we fall away.
To bear, when we would rather do, to do, what most we fear,

To be, and willingly to be, a byword and a jeer.
Unseen, unbidden, unapproved, to yield our will alone,
And thus in deed, not words, to say, Thy holy will be done.
The stripes of others' sins to bear, nor even to think it hard,

But still their good, their peace to ensue, and seek without reward.

With faces calm, and hearts of strength, and arm untired to stay,

Nor doubt, though mightier far than we are fallen on our way.

Nor peace to enjoy, nor rest to know, until the battle's won,—

By *this* the stainless robes are claimed—*this* is to "overcome."

And was it meet that we should seek such cruel boon for thee,

Thou early known and best beloved of friends most dear to me?

To pierce thy cloudless brow with thorns, thine eyes with
tears to swell,

Oh is it thus we seal thy choice, in this we love thee well?
Fain would I turn aside for thee some softer road to seek,
For oh, how strong is human love, the human heart how
weak!

Vain thought, unloving and unreal; upon the glassy sea
'Tis there, transfigured and enthroned, they keep a place
for thee.

But none may read his image fair reflected in that flood
Save who have fought their martyr way through yon red
sea of blood.

There loving angels waiting stand, and fold their sunny
wings;

There sainted seraph fingers sweep the soft celestial
strings.

Those mystic harpings to unfold, those tearless joys to
see,—

Beloved one, we *could not* ask a better lot for thee.

O pray we then the hero-part, the hero soul to own,

For still the gentle voice falls clear, "to them that over-
come!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND.

It matters little at what hour o' the day
The righteous falls asleep; death cannot come
To him untimely who is fit to die.
The less of this cold world, the more of heaven;
The briefer life, the earlier immortality.

MILMAN, *Fall of Jerusalem.*

It seems probable that to the dwellers in Paradise every natural object was not less an analogy than a fact; to them not merely as a spirit or sensation of beauty did the moon walk in her brightness, and the morning stars sing together, and the lilies excel the splendours of yet unborn kings; but over and beyond these primary suggestions of form and of colour, they would speak distinctively, significantly, in deep melodious intelligence, of things within the veil. And thus too, one cannot help thinking it may be even now in regard to the spirits and souls of the righteous. Perhaps to them each mysterious impression once derived here below from objects of sense, too fleeting or

impalpable for flesh and blood fully to inherit, and over which therefore, in the land of shadows, they could at best but dimly ponder as in a glass darkly, may now expand itself before them as the true representative on earth of that which is unseen and real, whose glorious archetype exists unapproachable among cherubim and seraphim. Perhaps what *we feel* after, *they know*. Some such correspondence between the realities of the two worlds seems to be implied in many unexplained visions of the elder prophets, and not the least so in that of Ezekiel, which relates, in so many chapters, "the frame of the city toward the south." But the analogy of nature, as presented to *us*, seems adjusted to our own altered condition; as if the curse laid upon the ground for man's sake implied, among other things, such an alteration;—a twilight state, neither clear nor dark; the analogy, like those it teaches, is often broken, often imperfect, always doubtful. It only helps us to be patient; it never hardly passes the bounds of that summing up, so afflictive to our imperious nature, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." To some minds the most distressing of those analogies in which nature and revelation, whilst true to each other, impart no ray of light to man, is the heaped-up accumulation on some, the seeming stint and denial to others, of the means and

opportunities of salvation. For, just as one may go astray in the wilderness out of the way, and for verdure find only piled rocks and burning sands, and then all by chance in its very heart may come upon an altar-piece of flowers, pouring out incense to God from their chalice cups—so, to this we may find many a perfect parallel, not merely in the broad contrast between heathenism and christendom, but also within the visible Church, our own Church, even within the narrow bounds of our own parish. And no voice expounds the riddle—nothing remains, save to strive after an acquiescence, necessary indeed, but stern and unsatisfied, in the free will and impartial sovereignty of God. Unless, indeed, it be allowed us to suppose, that for each apparent case of peculiar spiritual destitution a special agency is really reserved; some extraordinary means to raise invisibly the level; such as direct supernatural impressions; impulses but half-defined, yet most real and strong; and instinctive tendencies towards that which is spiritually good. Perhaps what follows may afford a confirmation to this view of the subject.

One very sultry day last summer, as I was loitering along a row of dirty cottages, I heard my name called from one of them, which is a little better than the others, inasmuch as it stands away from the road, fenced in by a small stone court, with a

dusty half-starved laburnum in front, which was trying to look green and shady. "Ma'am," said the woman of the house, "I se'ed you go up the street, and I've been awanting to speak to you, for I've got a lodger here, a young lad as is bound for another country, and all his delight is to be read to out of the Bible." Then she took me up stairs into the room where he lay, partly reclining, partly propped up on pillows because of his failing breath, a youth apparently about fifteen, whose appearance greatly interested me. It was not mere animal beauty, nor yet the fading flower-like look imparted by disease; there was something so pure in the fairly-moulded head and pencilled brow; so spiritual in the calm blue eye, most exquisitely shaded by its long dark lash; to my mind it conveyed the distinctive beauty of innocence. I thought he looked too delicate to live, yet much too lovely to die. When I went in he was employed in reading some devotional books which a kind friend had lent him, but his weakness made him prefer being read *to*, and this he asked me to do for him, with touching modesty, whenever I "had time." *His* time he said, he knew, was short; he would not have it otherwise; and it was at intervals, during the few weeks he survived after our first acquaintance, that I gathered the affecting particulars of his history. He had been brought

up at a distant parochial school, where his gentle disposition seems to have greatly endeared him to the other boys, for some of them kept frequent watch over his sick bed, cheering him with their presence and their small tributes of fruit and flowers. He was by nature delicate, and had been drooping for more than two years, taking first to the house, and then to his bed ; his last illness being aggravated and increased by the death of his mother, whom he had tenderly loved. It does not appear that throughout his long sickness (up to the last few weeks of his life, when he was brought into our parish for better air) he was, in any religious sense, enquired after or ministered unto. Thus left to himself on the one hand, he was on the other (we are unhappily aware) exposed to the contagious example of much evil. It does therefore appear as if in his case, some special interposition was peremptorily demanded, and it is certain that it came to him in a dream and vision of the night.

Most people are so extremely afraid of being thought "superstitious," that they go very near towards saying, that there is neither angel nor spirit, by evading their personality. Yet surely there is nothing so very unlikely in supposing that what certainly *has* been, may happen now; that there *are* ministering angels, ascending and des-

ceding ; blessed and divine occasions, when for purposes of unspeakable love, a watcher and an holy one comes down from heaven, in inspiration, in foreboding, even in actual, embodied form.

However, without going into the general phenomena of dreams, it is certain that a dream fixed *the* religious era to this neglected, sorrow-stricken child. He said it was not very long after his mother's death, whilst his grief was still fresh and sharp, that one night he seemed to be thinking of her, alone as he was wont, in their little kitchen, and he thought he heard her voice calling him by name, and he rose up saying, "Mother, mother, where are you?" And then he saw a form was beside him, such a form as angels are said to wear, silver-winged and very bright, like the clear brightness of the moon. That being spoke to him in his mother's voice, and bade him not to weep for her, for that she was among the blessed, and "all is tearless where I dwell." He said, "Oh take me, take me mother, back again with you!" And again that which seemed a spirit spoke, and told him that he could not come yet, for he must *suffer* first ; but if he would be patient, and keep in God's ways, he should be sent for in a year. Then he awoke, to darkness and loneliness, but he did not mind them *now* ; for to him that dream (or whatever else it was) was to all intents a *reality* ;

and like music of the heart that voice from Paradise dwelt with him:—death from henceforth took to him but one shape, a strangely gentle one,—it was “his mother coming to fetch him;” and all his desire was to make himself ready for it. Do we exclaim in amazement, as if this were some strange thing? But indeed it is our own fault if we make it such; for in that divine and therefore natural order, which from the beginning God constituted, and which man, from the beginning, has always done his best to disturb or set aside, there is nothing more evidently inherent than this, that those strong domestic harmonies into which for the most part we were ushered, without choice or volition of our own, were never meant to terminate in themselves, with no ultimate issue in Him who is the first and the best. The heathens had a truer thought than this, although like most of *their* truths, they could not keep it clear from error, when in the mortal existences of the good, they saw gods coming down in the likeness of men, and forthwith constructed out of that belief a ladder to connect earth and heaven. But Christians, to whom God is manifest in the flesh, *they* must needs pity *their* dead, and call them *poor*, and bewail them as lost; because there is a subtle materialism amongst us, which cannot distinguish between soul and body, but allows the

removal of the corruptible part to deprive us of our birthright as spirits, of our mystical communion with the faithful departed through Him who is the Father of spirits, the God, not of the dead, but of the living.

All through the intervening year, as he passed through much tribulation, this young sufferer accepted it in much patience and gentleness, for it sealed to him the promise, the day of his release. As the neighbour who nursed him said, it was "a pleasure to do anything for him:" no murmur ever passed his lips; he was thankful even for the cup of cold water, and he never received anything without entreating her to share it with him. He liked to hear of the sufferings of Christ, for he said it helped him to bear his own. He hoped to lean upon His breast, for he had tried to please Him, and to do all that he knew to be right. "*Please* will you read to me."—" *Thank you* for being so kind,"—such were his unfailing expressions.

I remember once, when I was alone with him, he coughed so hard that he could scarcely breathe, and I was putting my arms round him in order to raise him up. Though almost choking himself, he gasped out, "Stop, stop! I'm too heavy for *you*: please call some one." I thought I had seldom witnessed a trait of more ready unselfish-

ness—and when his sister came, it was still the same sweet expression, “Please, will you heave me up?” To one friend, his best earthly friend, who was obliged to leave home a short time before his death, he said, “Thank you for all your kindness; I know I shall not live to see you again in this world,”—he then requested that a small tablet should be brought to him; it contained an embossed picture of Christ’s “agony in the garden.” “It is the thing I loved best in the world,” he said, “it belonged to my mother; please take it now, and keep it in memory of me.” In the same thoughtful spirit he gave to the neighbour who had nursed him, a little favourite ornament of ruby glass. “I saw you admired it; you must keep it for my sake.” To this she objected, not liking to rob him of his few little treasures. “Oh yes,” he said, “indeed you must take it *now*; for perhaps when I am gone, they would not let you have it.” There were two pictures over his bed; a mourner carrying his cross, and the Saviour bearing a lamb on His bosom. The latter was his favourite; it soothed him to rest. Perhaps in an earlier part of his experience it might have been otherwise. He might,—he probably *would*—have preferred the other, as significant of his own afflicted state; and the thought might have harboured in his breast—it is a thought, that in

one subtle shape or other, still mischievously cleaves to persons far better instructed than he was, that a comparative innocency of life when united with bodily suffering, possesses a sort of expiatory merit in the sight of God. "One day," said our clergyman, "I found him writing a letter to his aunt. In it he said that he felt his end was near at hand, but that he was quite willing to go—that he had not been *a great sinner*, and hoped soon to meet his mother in heaven. I said gently that I did not think he meant to say what was wrong, and would on no account wish him to say what he did not *feel*. I supposed he meant that he had not committed great crimes; but I thought he must feel that he was by *nature* and disposition a great sinner, and that all his hope must be derived from the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He made no reply, but meekly took his pen and erased the offending words. The silent act of submission touched me."

For a long time he sank so slowly, almost imperceptibly, that we began to entertain hopes of a distant recovery: they were dissipated at once when I went in to him one day; for there was a dark shadow settled upon his face, *literally* the shadow from the valley of death; affecting, unmistakeable evidence of the silver cord about to be loosed, and the golden bowl broken. With

a remarkable instinct of the approaches of death, he had desired his nurse not to change his linen for a few hours. "Once more it will be needed, *only once more.*" "I am going fast," he said, when he saw me, "please read to me." The time of fruition was so near, methought the time of instruction was past, so I only read to him, what he said he had never heard before, S. John's description of the New Jerusalem, where the angels dwell, and the redeemed walk, snow-white, beatified, and crowned. I can never forget his dying, earnest look, as if he *realized* it all; and indeed it could have been to him no land that is very far off.

When the chapter was ended, he looked at me in silence for some time, as if he wanted to be quite sure he should know me again, and then he made a sign for me to stoop down and kiss him. I confess that to me there was something awful in that token, for I was sure he meant that by it we were to know each other again as friends at the judgment day; and that thought was overpowering.

In a few hours more it was all over; death came to him very gently, like the footsteps of a friend, and so, as it was meet, without a struggle or a fear, the wearied lamb lay down upon the Shepherd's breast.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of Mine hand."

He was a stranger with us; and it was in a still and lonely part of our churchyard that we laid him,—a spot hardly redeemed as yet from the wild white and purple nettles. But there can in reality be no such thing as loneliness, where the dead in Christ are not called dead, but sleeping. And as he died in peace, and rests in hope, so may he rise in glory. Yea, in that day when Thou, O Lord, shalt come to be our Judge, "Make him to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CRIPPLE.

Oft in life's stillest shade reclining,
In desolation unrepining ;
Meek souls there are who little dream
Their daily strife an angel's theme ;
Or that the rod they take so calm
Shall prove in heaven a martyr's palm.

Christian Year.

ONE by one we had all returned to our places after partaking, on Palm Sunday, of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ : yet the clergyman paused as if he waited for something ; and presently we saw that it was for a poor looking woman who slowly came up, or rather dragged herself along towards the altar rails ; for she was so very lame, that besides resting on her crutch, she was obliged frequently to stop, and to cling for support to the pew doors. One of our churchwardens, perceiving her condition, kindly came forward, and gave her his arm to lean upon. It was indeed greatly needed, for the perspiration stood in great drops on her face, and her whole frame "trembled very *exceedingly*," as she knelt to receive the gift of

soothing and of strength. "The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." I noticed that as she turned away, a tear which her hand, too well occupied with her crutch, could not wipe off, fell upon the pavement; but mere bodily weakness might easily account for *that*, without surmising the presence of other more special emotions.

Next Sunday I looked for her in vain; she did not come; and many more Sundays passed, I should think at least two months, and still she did not appear at Church. About Whitsuntide my friend, she whom I have called pre-eminently a "ministering angel," herself at that time in the very depths of affliction, asked me to drive with her to the Infirmary, to see a poor person in the surgical ward; "For," as with meek pathos she expressed it, "a blessing and refreshment seems to come back again, even upon our bodies, if in the sorrows of others, we ourselves try to lay aside 'the *grief that only grieves*.'" Now, I happened to have a great dread of the Infirmary; it was associated in my mind with dismal sights and bad smells; and the *surgical* ward above all! full of scars, and wounds, and "objects:" I was sure I should be frightened, most likely made sick. But yet to refuse to go would, under the circumstances,

require more courage still; so, like all cowards, I had recourse to a half measure, that of putting on a crape veil, so thick, that I hoped I should be able to see nothing through it. But, lo and behold, when the horses halted before the Infirmary gate, and I felt nervously for my veil, I had, after all, forgotten to put it on the last thing. It served me right, and was besides so deliciously absurd, that I could not help laughing, in spite of a strong opposite impulse to cry. So there was no help for it, but to follow Lady ——— down the ward in front of the long melancholy file of white beds; they looked to me like whited sepulchres, for each of them contained a marred, disfigured form. And it is a terrible thing to see the human face divine degraded thus, and made so abject. But my friend *would* linger beside each bed to meet with a cheerful greeting the wistful eye and hands that trembled as they were held out to her. At last, "Here is *my* patient," she exclaimed, stopping beside a bed in one corner; and the words were responded to by such a beaming look of gratitude from the poor creature who lay stretched upon it. It was actually the same face I had noticed at our Communion two months ago! "God bless your ladyship! How kind of you to come again so soon to see a helpless cripple like me!" And the poor thing began to weep bitterly, for she was just in that state of

almost infantine weakness, in which joy and sorrow are alike too much to bear. "Don't cry, dear Mrs. Lewis, it will hurt you; indeed, you mustn't," said Lady—— taking up and gently kissing the poor thin hands of the sufferer; then, as she sat down on the bed beside her, she turned to me, saying, "You will say something to brighten her; see, Mrs. Lewis, I have brought you a new friend." Thus necessitated, I made but a clumsy beginning. "I believe I saw you once before, Mrs. Lewis, at the Sacrament last Palm Sunday?" This allusion made her tears flow afresh. "Very likely, Miss," she sobbed; it was the last time I got to Church. "You hardly appeared fit to be out," I said. She looked at me very sweetly. "Why, Miss," she replied, "I know'd as how I was a coming here, and sure enough I wanted to find strength to come with." Lady—— saw I was puzzled, and by way of explaining, as well as to give a new direction to the conversation, she whispered, "She came here on purpose to have her left leg taken off; it had been hanging over her a long while; and a most dreadful operation it proved; only He was with her who never fails His own." Those last words were said, oh how evidently from the heart and its experience; in no vague notional manner, or because it was pious to say so. For on common ground the high and the lowly were met,

and in the furnace of seven-fold fire One had walked near them both, whose Form was like the Son of God, and whose Presence there had been to them as "a moist whistling wind." Yet I did not wonder *now* at the visible emotion betrayed by poor Mrs. Lewis when she partook of her last Communion. She "feared as she entered into the cloud." Well might she; the disciples did so too, though they knew that their Lord had entered it before them; there is nothing so terrible as to stand vaguely on the brink of unknown agonies; nothing wrong in the first natural starting back from it; we know this by the bloody sweat of our Lord, wrung out of Him with the cry, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me!"

For many weeks (I think thirteen in all,) Mrs. Lewis lay on, in that Infirmary ward, suffering much the while, in mind, body, and estate. Her past history was a painful one. She was the only child of a farmer in Warwickshire, at whose death she had inherited a portion of a few hundred pounds. Unfortunately, she had bestowed herself in marriage on a man, not exactly a wicked man, but what is worse, because it is more hopeless, a decidedly *weak* man; a wicked man may be turned, and then he will manifest the same energy for good that he has hitherto employed in evil; but there is no end of the man "without any fixed

principle," whose conduct is determined by the last company he has kept. So, whilst John Lewis was drinking and eating, or, as he called it, "enjoying himself a little," his wife's money was speedily dissipated, and she herself, though quite unused to hard work, was compelled to hire herself out to scrub and to wash. And then, when her constitution entirely broke down through the unwonted labour, and it was evident she could no longer maintain herself, he conveyed himself far away, on pretence of obtaining work, leaving her alone and penniless, with an awful operation in prospect, and with no other than the cold consolation of an occasional letter from himself, in which he invariably told his "dear wife" how "sorry" he was for her, but very seldom enclosed her any part of his large wages. So that, beyond the small sums she could still earn by needlework, she had no support to trust to but the charity of friends; and *this* was a keen humiliation to one so sensitive; born, moreover, so entirely above the mark of poverty. The selfishness of some men is truly wonderful; it is hardly too much to say that no *woman* could be guilty of such things. Nevertheless, with true feminine delicacy and love, Mrs. Lewis never willingly discussed her husband's unkindness. It came out to us through the neighbours, not from herself. When she was sufficiently recovered to leave the

Infirmiry, we obtained for her a pleasant south room, overlooking bowery gardens reaching down to the Church. She had a few pieces left of her old respectable furniture, such as a mahogany chest of drawers, her bed, and sofa; and then it became our delight to ornament her fire-place with grotesque china figures, and to cover her walls with devotional pictures; of these, her decided favourite was the image of a guardian angel, leading a little child towards heaven; it gave her "happy thoughts," she said. Of course she could not thus have expressed them, but I believe the substance of them might have been put into the verse,

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,"

Lead Thou me on;

The night is dark, and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene—*one step enough for me!*

In that room she sat all day, so exquisitely neat and modest-looking, generally sewing at least seven hours; the remaining time she devoted to reading and to her meals, though *they* were scanty and few; we could not always find out at the time, but often we discovered it when it was too late, that she had had no dinner at all. Hers was such patient meekness, full of the promise, "Them that are meek will He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle,

them shall He learn His way." It was this made us all love her so. Nobody grudged half an hour to go and sit with Mrs. Lewis, and learn patience. Not that she would teach us anything by *word*; for hers was also that deep religious reverence that lies too deep for expression, fearing, lest after confession of the lip, we should in act deny the Lord who bought us. "Oh Miss," she once said, "it does trouble me when people pray so loud, and so noisy like; as if they would bring the Almighty down from heaven!" She *felt*, in fact, in regard to a loud religious profession, what John Bunyan, in one of his closing sublimities, *expresses*,—"Then I saw that there was a way to hell even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the city of Destruction."

By nature she was refined and sensitive, so that in *her* the influence of religion naturally took the form of the higher *graces*, over and above all right principles. In love, gratitude, and affectionateness, I have very seldom seen her equal. And her generosity was equally remarkable. I remember her once sitting up late several nights in order to finish, gratuitously, a set of clothes for the orphan children of one of our poor people. Another time she undertook freely to teach a child reading and working. She used to try the same with me. "Dear Miss, do let me help you with your work;

I should be so delighted;" and once she succeeded in laying hands on a pattern baby frock, which I could by no means get back again till she had finished it.

One of our school-girls loved her dearly; she used to get up an hour earlier even on the cold winter mornings, in order that she might light Mrs. Lewis's fire, and put on the kettle for her, before she went to school. I have known the noble child refuse money when it was offered her by ladies, for doing these sort of offices. She said, resolutely, "No; she would rather the money went to Mrs. Lewis," to whom, indeed, she privately brought it, when on one occasion it was forced upon her. That was a beautiful little girl, light and graceful, with a Grecian profile and oval face; she made a perfect picture, as she sat, in the evenings, on Mrs. Lewis's foot-stool, reading the Bible to her, or else seeking her help to dress up her wax doll in a variety of silk rags. Sometimes, when I was from home, Mrs. Lewis would write me a letter. "I thought very much about you on Christmas day, and wished I could have gone to Church to commemorate our Blessed Saviour's birth, by partaking of the Holy Communion, but I trust I joined you in spirit, and was thankful; for, as dear Miss C * * * says, I am sure to be *remembered in the beautiful prayers of the*

Church." (I retain the original spelling, to mark the authenticity.) Again, speaking of the death of a friend, "But what is one's loss is the other's gain; and I trust, after a few more years or perhaps months, we shall all enter that world of bliss where pain and sorrow is ended, and where the heavy-laden find rest."

I might multiply extracts, for she was my *friend*, and when I was in trouble, I used to commit it to her. "Dear Miss," she once wrote, in allusion to this, "both of us have need of patience to bare the Cross laid upon us, and our Saviour can give it to us, and only He, who can shed His Spirit of gentleness and patience over our worn and aching hearts."

Yes, it was in *her* case the old tale, the mystery of special suffering, without special sin. How may we account for it? Not by saying carelessly, in the false philosophic jargon of the wise men of last century, that "whatever *is*, is right;" for that is nonsense, and besides, it is not true. The Bible does not say that *whatever is, is right*, and there is never any need of man's falsehoods in order to sustain God's truth. No "ideas" or surmises of a "general Providence" will meet it, such as, "Providence is prodigal of the courage, the virtues, even the sufferings and life of individual men, to accomplish His designs for the *general* good." No,

not till we believe that over waters of affliction and mountains of wrong One fairer than the children of men is moving, and, in spite of themselves, still striving with each one of them, by means of these discordant elements to bring out His likeness upon them, to give them beauty for ashes, and the joys of the blessed for heaviness,—shall we be able to get beyond the complaint. “They went astray in the wilderness out of the way; and found no city to dwell in.” And to take up the response, sometimes distant, sometimes doubtful, “He led them forth *by the right way*; that they might go to the city where they dwelt.” “Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!”

“THY WILL BE MINE.”

’Twas once I dared to breathe the unfaltering prayer,
In giddy youth, “Thy will be mine, O Lord!”
Nor deemed of awful mysteries hidden there;—
God knew in heaven, and took me at my word.

I could not see it then, I see it *now*;
I lov’d to choose my way, all risks to run,
To get a name. My will was forced to bow
To petty, daily cares:—*Thy will was done.*

I sought sweet sympathy, the perfect bliss
Of friendship's early love; and, one by one,
They left me all *alone*; I knew by this,—
With bitter tears I owned, *Thy will was done*.

I asked for means to enjoy, for health to see
The beauties of this world we dwell upon;—
Toils, sickness, vigils, want, *were laid* on me,
And falsehood's power; and thus *Thy will was done*.

Oh, then I shrank from life's tempestuous sea;
I writhed, but murmured not beneath Thy rod;
And then my broken heart fled home to Thee,
My Shepherd, and my Father, and my God.

Thou, Lord, didst hear, when seeming not to hear,
To my weak senses,—didst Thy will, not mine,—
Didst gently lead me through the vale of tears,
Nor put *my* meaning on my prayer, but *Thine*.

Thy will be done! The shadow of Thy hand,
Deepening, may cause each pleasant plant to pine;
Blest shadow! heavenly foretaste of that land
Where shadows cease, and my will *shall* be Thine!

CHAPTER X.

THE PARISH PRIEST.

When good men cease to live—
When, brightening ere it dies away
Mounts up their altar-flame,
Still tending with intenser ray
To heaven, whence first it came,—
Say not it dies, that glory
Tis caught unquenched on high.

No smile is like the smile of death,
When all good musings past—
Come wafted on the parting breath—
The sweetest thought the last.

KEBLE'S *Christian Year*.

"THE water urns of heaven," as the Arabs felicitously call what *we* call clouds, were making the Easter holidays something more than rainy. The water poured in little spouts with unrelenting diligence, splashing down our gravel walk in circles and eddies. And as to the flowers, *they* were all but annihilated. Even the speckled laurel bushes were more than half drowned. To get out, being thus out of the question, it seemed natural to

devote a little time to watching the rain as it trickled down the window panes, and in "wondering wherever it all came from!" I was thus occupied, when I saw the tall, spare figure of a stranger who was trying to unlatch our garden gate; he seemed to set about it as a thing that *had to be done*, and therefore, *would* be done, and then he walked up the path with the firm equal step of a man in whom dwells the conviction that he has "no time to spare." He was dressed in black, and had a crape band round his hat, and it occurred to me he must be one of the clergymen of the parish in which we were newly settled.

His countenance was not that of a young man, and yet it *was*; for whilst it was marked and furrowed by the lines both of thought and of suffering, there was in the deep-set grey eye an expression of eager, of intense energy; then on the mouth there constantly lingered a touch of fine irony, checked on the very lip by words of delicate and tender forbearance; and the most generous consideration for the comforts of others expressed itself in combination with an ascetic, half-contemptuous indifference to his own. Such grand contradictions are perhaps seldom seen, except when they are brought out in the life of a Christian of the highest order; a hero-Christian, or a martyr-Christian.

All this impressed me during our first interview, whilst at the same time his conversation, flowing and yet pointed, conveyed to your mind for a certainty, that *he* was one who spoke because he had something to say, not one who said something because he wanted to talk. Amongst other things, he evidently intended to find *me* something to do, for he asked me point blank if I would take a class of little children at his school? I had no particular objection to make, though I felt I was conferring a great obligation to give up any portion of my valuable time and lady-like accomplishments, for the benefit of a knot of dirty children, ignorant too and wilful below the average, even by his own shewing. So I said I would *try*, in a condescending sort of way, which however was quite lost on *him*, who thought the honour lay all on the other side, to be permitted to work *at all* in his Master's vineyard. He simply desired me to fix an early day and hour to meet him at the school, when he would put me in the way of my duties; and then he took up his dripping umbrella, and away he went, leaving me with the uncomfortable conviction that I had engaged myself to a very hard master, who would neither make, nor yet receive, excuses.

I am not writing a panegyric. There is a Protestant sort of hagiology, which must needs

have its canonized men; a christianized system of demi-gods and hero-worship. But even if there *were* such fabulous animals as pattern people, it would impart small comfort to ordinary mortals to see frigid specimens of sinless humanity ascending like gods out of the earth, stolen out of, rather than belonging to, the brotherhood of our race. Probably such a specimen could only with advantage be given in His adorable Person, of whom "we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is *God and Man*."

But as in the characters both of the Old and New Testament, we have every possible type of pure humanity presented to us, under the influence of divine grace.—In one, the type of stern resolution; in another, of passive courage; or of waiting patience; or of an almost feminine tenderness and susceptibility. So our friend and guide always kept us in mind of John the Baptist; he was not a man clothed in soft raiment, but his own soul was so filled to overflowing with the treacheries of a luxurious generation, that he could do little else but cry aloud, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight." And he was like to his great precursor more abundantly in this, that whilst in our eyes he was a burning and a shining light, in his own he was less than the least of all saints.

I recollect going up to the school next Monday, with some Eutopian "plans" got up in the interval, which on trial would, I was certain, transmute our parochial schools into something very like Dr. Watts's "nest of young doves, in a large open cage," including of course that affectionate corollary about playing "all together, without anger or rage." (Oh the conceit of novices! They are always provided with some patent medicine or other. "N. B. an infallible cure.") Moreover, I own to some high-flown expectations of finding the clergyman teaching the children *ex cathedra*, not quite in his surplice, but something very like it. No such thing; there he was, actually standing in front of a row of little boys, of most irregular sizes, who were dressed in ragged pinafores, with heads rougher than a besom, and were blundering along through a first lesson in numeration, which he was marking for them on the black board with a great lump of white chalk. "Oh," he said, when he saw me, "please come this way, and I will show you your class,"—and without a minute's delay he walked me into the girl's school, and set me down to a dozen of the most perverse, provoking children I had ever beheld. It was all so disgustingly matter-of-fact; and *he* did not mend it, when he began to tell me the best position in which to place my chair, and how I must mind

that the children came in clean pinafores, and with smooth hair, and other small particulars, which I thought a great bore, petty and wearisome, and quite "beneath me;" for I did not then know, what *he* knew, and I know it better now, how "he that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little."

He then left me to get through my first spelling lesson, and returned to his boys, having first set down in pencil in my pocket book the names of my scholars, and expressed a wish that I would occasionally visit them at their own homes—"for *that*," said he, "keeps a school together." How tiresome! what a plague! is what I thought *then*. But those faint pencil-marks that linger still on the single leaf of that little old green memorandum book, bring tears to my eyes whenever I look at it *now*.

We have dwelt on this first intercourse with our departed guide, because it seems to us to present the great characteristic of his life, an all-pervading and persevering energy in the path of *duty*, however mean or uncongenial that path might be; however small or even abortive its apparent results. "May you only have grace to persevere *up the hill*; for assuredly, the more of the Holy Cross we bear, the more recompensing the end will be!" It was thus he used to turn our very discouragements

into a pledge and an earnest of victory. Doubtless it was the entire absence of *self* in his labours that helped him to take this unclouded view of the *end*, for it enabled him to look beyond all that (through human folly or perversity,) lay between the present effort and its ultimate issues. "You know *we* are working *for the future*; we will sow the seed, and then they who come after us, as they gather in the harvest, will think of us in love; and thus he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." It was thus he used to cheer us when we grumbled or fretted; and his voice was always to us like that of the silver trumpet, which nerved the Lord's hosts, and made them shout for the battle. To *us* he was himself a living epitome of the principle, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device in the grave, whither thou goest." That his life would most probably not be a long one, was to him no indistinct nor unwelcome foreboding; he had first recognised it in the rupture of a blood-vessel, with all its ultimate probabilities. And if before, yet more abundantly *now*, with his loins girded, and his eye so quick, and his heart so strong, he went upon his Master's business as one who was ever listening for the cry in the heavens, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!" With that rare nobility of soul which

concentrates itself on a noble end, in the results of which it can have no personal interest, it was thus he set himself, in the common-place routine of material school-building, of cottage-visiting, lending libraries, sermons and catechizing, to prepare the way for those who should come after him. In the words of Nehemiah, "I have a great work to do, and I cannot come down," he disposed of all demands made on him to mingle in passing controversies, in purely dogmatical theology, indeed in *anything* even of a religious tendency, that did not directly bear on the spiritual necessities of these, his few sheep in the wilderness. And they knew his voice, and many we hope will follow him where he is, for his words and his parting gifts are very dear among them still. It is true that into a short space he had to crowd all his high purposes; but long life is, in itself, no blessing. The useless lives of many antediluvian patriarchs, presenting only the facts that they lived and died, are sufficient to make us feel, "that honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, neither that is reckoned by the number of years," "But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age." It was indeed with a marvellous humility (*we* could not at all admit the truth of it,) that just before his last sickness he said, "If all the precious moments I have spent

upon complaints against systems or persons, had only been devoted to *quiet perseverance* in the thing that my hand found to do, I should have effected much, that now appears *against* me as a thing *undone* which might have been done." He had always an uncommon dread of anything, whether mere religious declamation or emotion, or vanity concealing itself under the venerable name of self-examination, that might tend to weaken the impulses of self-sacrifice in its most homely, every-day forms.

"Avoid self-contemplation," he would say, "it will lead on to self-complacency: continued, persevering, (as far as possible *unconscious*) *action and labour* for God, is our best refuge." He had no faith in any self-denial that was not exercised in detail; nor in any line of conduct which depended upon external circumstances. Moreover, he so disliked what South calls "spiritual clack," the "Talkatives" of our modern "religious world," that except in special cases, his own sentiments on the highest subjects were more generally conveyed in a terse and epigrammatic, than in a didactic form; as if those noble lines were ever in his thoughts;

Prune thou the words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong.

But he, who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe.

NEWMAN, *Lyra Apostolica*.

Next to religious "excitement," and, as near akin to it, he disliked that restless love of novelty and change which is everywhere abroad; at the best he regarded it as an infirmity, to be prayed against, and by prayer and *labour*, to be overcome. "However unsatisfactory our position may be, the more the *grains* of holy love and labour are precious! Oh, pray be sure of *this*—you cannot lose your faith in *Christ*! The Word of God is one and unchangeable. The visible Church is a mystery. Must we not be content, with the two witnesses, to prophesy in sackcloth, till the end shall come?" But where he suspected that the desire of change proceeded from a versatile or a discontented temper, he kept no terms with it. "It should be a very clear voice indeed," he remarked, on an occasion of this kind, "to prevail with us that we are following the monitions of the Holy Spirit rather than our own fretfulness and lack of patience. Active employment among the poor would be your protection. Yours is the common mistake; you fancy that because a man strongly asserts his own privileges, he must necessarily deny them to

others; whereas we have in this sense nothing to do with others; to their own Master they must stand or fall. As to those beyond the pale of the Church, it has always been my desire and effort to think, believe, and hope the very best of all, who tell me they *love* our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and therefore I have sought to avoid the harsh language of religious controversy, and rather to *do* what came to my hand where God was pleased to lead me." In fact, no "lion in the streets" ever kept *him* back from a plain and obvious duty, not even when it lay in the odious part of a reprover, although I believe on one occasion he encountered personal violence, when, like John the Baptist, he "boldly rebuked vice." For the children of our schools he had always a peculiar, a parental care. Their very perversities commended them the more to him, through Him who likened humanity in general to the children playing before Him in the market place. And the thoughts which in his sermons he principally dwelt on were borrowed from infancy and angels, high as the stars above our head, or lowly like the flowers beneath our feet. And yet much as he thought of the *children*, "the *teachers*," he would say, "are still nearer to me, with all their immense powers for good, or for *evil*. Do not, my young friends, look at the outward appearance—the lovely face, or the

quick reply—rather look onwards to the day when *He* will reckon up His jewels, and call you to account if His little ones are wanting. And oh, whatever you do, I trust that both before and after each successive effort, you will make a special oblation of it to God, for *that* will keep steadily in your remembrance that *you* are only poor instruments through which the God of all grace deigns to *act*." And sooner than any of us looked for, *his* work was turned into fruition, and *his* labours into rest. Once more he wrote to us in beautiful language of those "Shadows of the Cross" under which he lay, and which teach us the *realities* of our existence, and whither we are all hastening, and what will *then* be our true riches; namely, to have obtained eyes to discern Christ in *all* His little ones—to have condemned and thought meanly of ourselves—to have leaned only upon His heavenly grace and all perfect oblation—to have yearned for the unity of His body, although the discord of Babylon (or confusion) sound more in our ears than the harmonies of heaven—to have held on to truth—at whatever cost;—to have preferred small success to apparently greater things, because it is more like the origin of the Gospel." But still our eyes were holden; we could not see that he was dying—dying the death of a true martyr, worn out in his Master's service. Towards the end he

sank rapidly, with great prostration and unconsciousness. All at once he woke up out of that deceitful slumber,—“*I am going home,*” he repeated, with a smile that outlasted life itself, for it lingered on his features the last earthly look that we gave him, and told us that death had come to *him*, and stood beside him, transformed into an angel of light.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments : that they may have right to the tree of life; and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

We may most fitly take leave of him in a few words borrowed from one of his favourite books—the departing of Mr. Standfast, in the “*Pilgrim's Progress* :”

“I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was buffeted for me.

“I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself.

“I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His foot in the earth, there I have coveted to set mine also. His voice to me has been most sweet; and His countenance I have more desired than they that

have most desired the light of the sun. His words I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me, and has kept me from mine iniquities. Yea, my steps have been strengthened in His way.


“Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed; his strong man bowed under him; and after he had said, ‘Take me, for I come unto Thee,’ he ceased to be seen of men.”

CHAPTER XI.

OUR VILLAGERS.

And when Thou mak'st Thy jewels up,
And sett'st Thy starry crown ;
When all Thy glittering gems shall shine,
Proclaimed by Thee Thine own,—
May we, we little band of love,
We sinners, saved by grace,
From glory into glory changed,
Behold Thee face to face.

WOULD you like to know a few more of our people, those who are spared with us, and to us? First of all you must look at that tight little house, with snow-white blinds, (it is really too genteel-looking to be called a *cottage*, although they *have* named it "Myrtle Cottage.") That belongs to a master mason, and altogether it stands so exclusive and bolt upright in its prim little garden, bordered with slates and garnished with yellow clumps of Lent lilies, that it quite frightened me, and it was a long time before I ventured to seek acquaintance within. I should have lost something if I had not though, for I found there such a meek, patient invalid; she scarcely ever knows what it is to have



a day's health, but she has learned that "lesson of sweet peace,"

"Rather in all to be resigned than blest."

And she is so quietly diligent, that her house is the very model of the village. Enter the small kitchen when you will, there is neither speck nor spot to be seen upon the scoured floor, and the brass candlesticks and tin saucepans might be real gold and silver for brightness. And there is pussy too, such a beauty, in her smooth coat of striped satin, purring from her own most original dwelling-house, a tea-chest turned upside down beside a fire so temptingly red, it always makes me long to poke it. The summer parlour is better still; it is carpeted and papered: the paper represents a robin redbreast, a rosebud, and a butterfly, following each other in a perpetual succession; a sort of abortive attempt at what drapers call "a running pattern." And there is the family Bible, bound in antiquated sheepskin, and printed on yellowish paper, like parchment, containing the mason's genealogical tree, and this caution into the bargain,

"Steal not this book for fear of shame;
For here you read the owner's name."

Over the fire-place are what, in courtesy, we are bound to call *portraits*, of the master and his

"missus:" he is dressed in a blue coat with gold buttons as big as coins; and she wears a scarlet gown and a prodigious cap, trimmed with sea-green ribbons. Below them are some "broken tea-cups wisely kept for show," which, we may add by way of jingle, do most decidedly "glitter in a row." On the opposite wall are pictures which would delight Mr. Ruskin; so purely pre-Raphaelite. Pharaoh's daughter, a strong-minded woman, in an ermine victorine and pearl necklace, frantically pulling little Moses out of a modern cradle; the companion piece being a yellow prodigal returning to a green father, who is killing a purple calf. But the chef-d'œuvre is a specimen sampler, framed and glazed, containing a bunch of green silk which we are told is the tree of knowledge of good and evil; it is loaded with enormous, unwholesome-looking apples, at which, from opposite sides, Adam and Eve are gazing quite desperately, each of them carrying a spade and a hay-rake.

Certainly, the poor *will* have religious pictures; so, putting on one side all conceited ideas of pure spiritualism, our best plan seems to be to assist them in obtaining *good* ones: such as will suggest to them worthy conceptions of the most worthy subjects.

Two doors lower down there is a nice old woman who quite appropriates the first part of Coleridge's

definition of her class, which he asserts is divided into three parts; first, you dear old soul; second, you old woman; third, you old witch. Not that she is in the least picturesque looking. No silver-grey hairs for a crown of glory, for she actually wears a frizzled toupée, and a black cap upon that; moreover, she has cheeks of cherry-red, and little ferrety eyes peeping through spectacles. But she sits alone in her fusty, dusty room, so busy and so bright. Always working, never fretting; I believe that, "of the dew of heaven" she lives. I have often wondered how it is that the poor, even those of them who are not remarkable for religious convictions, are wont to bow beneath the will of God with a much readier and more enduring patience than we do, who call ourselves more "enlightened" than they. "It is the will of God"—"God's will be done," are expressions which issue from *their* lips with more reality than they do from ours. Lately I have come to think that it is because they retain the childlike conception of God as a Person in whom they can trust; because He is known to them through the intelligible medium of human sympathies and suffering; whilst we, in what we consider our sublimer knowledge, are accustomed to think of Him as a Power, till, in the cant of our wise foolishness, *He* becomes to us no more than one of His own

attributes; the Incomprehensible, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent; perhaps the "self-existent;" strange paraphrase this of ours upon the living, the gracious "I am." "Behold, *I am* with Thee, and will keep Thee in all places whither Thou goest; for I will not leave Thee." Is this a Person, or an abstraction? Perhaps we call this language *anthromorphic*, or by some other unpronounceable name; but indeed, if we come to *that*, the first Christians are in the same condemnation, for it was by the knowledge of the "perfect man" alone that *they* knew the "perfect God." By a new and better way than that old way of imposture—which by independent knowledge and light without love promises to make men as gods knowing good and evil, and in doing so, does but fathom the mystery of hell,—this knowledge was given them; "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God."

Next after the old woman, we come to an old man of fourscore; all labour and sorrow now, he has lain two years in his garret, and there he *must* lie the brief remainder of his pilgrimage. He has the remains of noble features, and sometimes he looks quite smart under his patched counterpane of gay colours, in a sort of Turkish nightcap. But he can read nothing, and he is so deaf, he can hear very little; he lives on,

dependent alike upon the alms and the kind offices of others; but he is no grumbler, only he likes one to read to him, he says it "passes the time." And sometimes he is very attentive when,

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
 How He who bore in heaven the second name
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
 How His first followers and servants sped;
 The precepts sage they wrote for many a land;
 How he who lone in Patmos banished
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
 And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by heaven's
 command.

BURNS' *Cotter's Saturday Night*.

Indeed, like nearly all the poor, he is very fond of the Revelations of Patmos, the book that is sealed. Whether only they delight in the gorgeous pictures in which it abounds—although the emerald bow, and the city with its streets of pure gold, the sea of glass mingled with fire, the tree of life for medicine, the living fountains of comfort; bread for the hungry, waters for the thirsty, the mysterious harpings of ten thousand times ten thousand already entered into their rest, with all their strong musical charms for the weary and the heart stricken—may after all to *them* underlie a meaning and a teaching undiscerned by *us*; in accordance with that distribution which hides things from the wise

and prudent, revealing them to babes. My old man is not particularly sociable; yet even *he* does not live in vain; he teaches us by his mute patience, and often his hearty "God bless ye!" cheers those who have little else to cheer them.

We come next to an old-looking house, with a white cow over the door, painted on a blue ground; the milkman and his wife live there, good creatures both of them, of sturdy English hearts that cannot stoop to seek charity, but with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. They will accept *sympathy* though, and return it in pressed measure, if it express a kindly interest in them as individuals, not as mere instruments for our pleasure or profit. We have so long thought of them as such, that the poor have found us out at last, and have ceased to expect from us anything but *wages*, or what they can extort out of us in an indirect way. They are rather surprised when we testify any voluntary interest in them that is not connected with *our own* interests. And this painful symptom ought to be felt as of itself a punishment greater than we can bear. But it is all our own fault. Returning down the principal street, we come upon the little hair-dresser's shop, where every body is sure of a civil word and welcome. People say it is the nucleus for all the gossip of the place; but *that* is nonsense, for, even without

a hair-dresser's shop, there is no such thing as a secret in such a village as ours. There are always two or three middle-aged ladies at the least, "without encumbrances," who having nothing particular to do, very naturally devote their time to prying into their neighbour's concerns; and then, there are the servants, who pick up disjointed bits of conversation, and take occasional peeps into open letters, and then "lay this and that together." To say nothing of the children, who, however, are really ubiquitous; so that it is no wonder that not only what *is* done is known, but what *will* be done is often under discussion, sometime before the doer of it has the least conscious intention of doing anything at all. We shall therefore absolve from all peculiar participation in these results both our good-tempered hair-dresser and the grave chemist opposite, who has that quaint row of blue and green and red glass bottles set in his shop window. It is there that every morning they blow the horn, to signify that the monster omnibus, lined with crimson velvet, and drawn by three chestnut horses abreast, is about to start for "the city;" and on that pavement every evening out-swarms its little world of return passengers. A few paces above is a green-grocer's shop, the owner of which, "a lone woman," as she calls herself, is always engaged in a series of Punic wars with the pert drivers at the

"stand" opposite, who ply their painted curricles up and down with ponies, or a pair of Spenser's "unhastie beasts." Her philippics are liberally embellished with "He says," and, "So said I;" but they invariably terminate with a "delenda est Carthago," directed against her mischievous opposites.

We *could* protract our walk, varying it with, alas! but too many *dark* spots; but we would spare others the sight of what pains ourselves; nor, whilst our cloud has such a silver lining to it, can we be otherwise than well content to live and die under it. It is true that the evening of the world has come, and the shades have gathered thick round the jewelled walls of the celestial city, and the mists of long-continued folly render so vague its glorious outline, that sometimes hardly can we believe it exists; and yet it *is there*, and it is our home; the home of our hearts, the place of the rest of our God; where all His children shall be gathered, not one missing, its living stones sought out and numbered from many a nameless dwelling, for indeed while men say, Lo here, or lo there! they forget that the kingdom of heaven is within them.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRANGER.

— The mighty sky-born stream :—
Its living waters from above
All marred and broken seem,
No union and no love.

We that with eye too daring seek
To scan their course, all giddy turn :—
Not so the floweret meek,
Harebell or nodding fern :

They from the rocky wall's steep side
Lean without fear, and drink the spray;
The torrent's foaming pride,
But keeps them green and gay.

And Christ hath lowly hearts, that rest
Amid fallen Salem's rush and strife;
The pure, peace-loving breast
Even here can find her rest.

LYRA INNOCENTIIUM. *The Waterfall.*

It has been well and wisely remarked, that one strong reason why the houses of God should be rendered, as far as may be, perfect in costliness and beauty, is because it is only in this way that the *poor* can share in those precious things which He has bestowed upon our beautiful world—at

least in any sense of personal interest or possession. They may, indeed, look upon shining heaps of gold and silver—upon gems and pearls from the far East, but it is only to *look* at them with a painful, perhaps with a grudging feeling, that these can never be *theirs*. But it is not thus in the Church; nothing is, or at least, nothing *ought to be, exclusive* there; the “many members” of the “one body” have a common interest, a common right, in her ministers, her sacraments, her Book (so affectionately entitled) of *Common Prayer*, and in the visible glories of her thousand shrines. And God forbid that here, in England, she should ever forfeit her proudest title, “The Poor Man’s Church!” Of all places, perhaps, thoughts like these come uppermost in a Cathedral Church, where the building itself is more magnificent, the services are more majestic, and attendance on both is more absolutely free, than in most other Churches; besides, these Churches are open, not only on Sundays, but twice every day; so that in the places where they are the house of God is not shut from one week to another against the mourner, who would fain open there his griefs, nor to those whose happier experience would find its key-note of praise in the rich chants of the Psalms, or the glorious *Te Deum*. And then, that solemn grey pile itself, covering the space of at least four modern Churches, with

perhaps as many massive towers, standing out in a sort of shadowy solitude, only interrupted by the cawing of the rooks that have built their nests in the tall old trees that stand all round it, looks down like a silent witness on the crimes of the generations, past and present, who have lived, and sinned, and died, under its unchanging shadow.

But, if we *enter* by the old porch, it is hard to say whether our first impressions will be those of greatness, or of beauty, probably a mixture of both, for whilst pillared aisle, and lofty arch, and stately column will carry the eye upward till it is lost in the mazes of the wondrous roof, its branches and bosses, like a forest of stonework knotted with briar-roses, yet the glance will be arrested, and almost fastened downward, by the carven oak, and fairy embroidery, and variegated marbles shed in mellowed abundance on its very pavements, and seen by the light of each deep-stained lattice, in changeable hues of scarlets, and amber, and lilacs.

It was one fine summer evening, as I was passing through the nave to attend prayers in our Cathedral, that I noticed a very poor, but very happy-looking young woman, with two little black-eyed girls at her side, who were peering at the old monuments with all the unmistakeable wonderment of strangers. Now, I am sorry to say that I did not at that time give the poor credit for that

good taste in religious matters which they really possess. Not but that I know that some of the peculiar features of a Cathedral service,—the mighty peal from the organ, like the voice of a great thunder,—the company of priests and singing children, all wearing the white robe, and joining in that flood of harmony which audibly proclaims, “Day by day, we magnify Thee;”—the crumbling monuments of those who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and rest in the sleep of peace; the triumphant forms of the glorified, that gleam upon us from each pane, and cast their bright mantles in rainbow tints over us, as if in token to bid us follow them, even as they followed Christ;—all this, I was aware, must affect the dullest imagination, and, for the time at least, warm the coldest heart. But I did not at that time think that the poor were quick to take up the lesson which all this is intended to teach,—in truth, I had practically forgotten it myself,—that *we are*, all of us, living or departed, rich and poor, lonely or beloved, knit together in one communion and fellowship, one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Oh, we need not teach the poor the *difference* that there is between their earthly lot and ours! They feel *that* too well already, for too often our unkindness or selfishness makes the sense of it

enter like iron into their soul. Rather we would teach them—when we have learnt it ourselves—that in the sight of our one Father which is in heaven, in the eyes of our one mother, His Church upon earth, we not only *shall* one day be,—we *are*, even now, *equals*,—only like servants, or like children at school, we have different tasks, different ministries to fulfil. This is no poetic dream, but a simple *reality*, at least if holy Scripture can make it so, for “as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members, being many, are one body; *so also is Christ.*”

But to resume. Some dim idea, that if the poor did not feel in this way, it was not altogether *their* fault, led me to address a chance remark to one of the pretty children I spoke of. I think it related to the beauty of the Church, for I remember she said, with a little rosy blush of pleasure at being noticed, that she had seen quite as pretty Churches in London; and then the young mother curtsied and looked pleased too (as people do when they are in a strange place, where they have no one to speak a kind word to them,) and said they had come from London a few days ago. Of course, I supposed they had popped in to see the minster, as every body does, because it is one of the “lions” of the place, and I never expected to see them again, least of all *there*. However, in a day or

two, as I came out of the choir, I espied the comely countenance of my new friend; she was sitting alone on a long bench close beside the screen in the nave, where, by listening closely, one can just manage to follow the service. She looked quite happy and at home, and had a little old prayer-book in her hand, out of which she told me, when I asked her—not till then—she had been going along with the worshippers inside; she added, with much simplicity, that she did the same “most days.” “But do come inside next time; there is plenty of room, and you know we ought all of us to pray together.” “Yes, ma’am, and so we ought; and you may depend upon it I shall too, when I have had time to get cleaned up a bit;”—a simple, but, as it seemed to me, a striking way of expressing her notion of the outward reverence that is due to holy things and places.

And she was as good as her word; for every evening afterwards, fair weather or wet, she and her prayer-book made their appearance in the choir, although her clothes were so patched and threadbare that it must have been painful to her to expose them to the observation of others: but then, as she once expressed it,—“You see, ma’am, my husband don’t like to come to Church, until he can get better clothes to come in; but I’m sure, if I was to wait for *that time*, I should never get there at all.”

In fact, I soon found that poor Martha was never likely to attain to anything in this world, beyond the bare necessities of food and raiment; for, besides that her family already consisted of four hungry little ones, she was subject to this additional drawback, that her husband, being an iron-worker, was frequently thrown out of work, and was still more frequently obliged, with his family, to lead an unsettled, vagrant sort of life, in following the course of the various new railways. It was on this account, she told me, with a sorrowful tear in her eye, that she had had to leave her home in the Poplar District, London, where her youngest child was buried; and then she added, with the full heart of a stranger, "I have no one to speak to me in all this great city, and I sometimes feel very desolate; indeed, I never feel *at home* here, except when I come to this old Church—it reminds me of home. It is the same prayers, the same words, just like as it was at our Church at home. It was there I used to go every evening when I was at home."

We were standing at the base of the grey granite tower, with the evergreen ivy climbing up its sides, and its battlements cutting the deep blue sky; the old dial shewed the approach of sun-down, and the summer breeze sighed among the limes, and the sheep were lying down to rest under the sacred

shadow; everything around us and above us spake of loveliness and peace. But I think it was a far holier feeling that thrilled through me at that moment, as my humble companion laid her hand on my arm, and said, in a low solemn tone, "Yes, it is all the same *here* as *there*, for we are all the children of One Father."

"One communion and fellowship." That *fact* has remained with me ever since, like voices of perpetual music. Some may be like the lofty turrets that cut the sky, whilst others resemble the lowly ivy plant that draws its scanty nourishment from the clefts of the lowest stone of yonder tower:—yet still, *all one*, for "now are *we* many members, yet but one body."

Soon after this I paid a visit to Martha's present abode, which consisted only of a couple of upper rooms in one of those unhealthy lodging-houses for the poor, too common in our large towns, into each of which from twelve to twenty families are sometimes packed, without pure air, and almost without the pleasant light of the sun. The one which Martha lived in was not quite so bad as this, and yet it was bad enough, for to get at it, you had first to thread a narrow lane, and then a noisome court, both of them crowded with human beings as miserable-looking as filth and effluvia could make them; at the end of this, we entered a

dark passage, and finally climbed up two flights of crazy wooden stairs, which landed us at last in Martha's best room, all newly washed and sanded, whilst each of the few articles of furniture it contained had also been dusted and set in order. One could not help thinking of the old proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

I went and stood beside the open casement, dislodging for that purpose a rather testy black pussycat, which retreated, mewing loud complaints at being disturbed in her monopoly. There was no fresh country air, nothing rural or pleasant to look out upon, such as one usually associates with the cottages of the English poor. And yet I could not help thinking that what there *was* was rightly bestowed on *her*, for between the alley, and the black, sooty forges, was a small paddock about as big as a middle-sized room, in which two or three sheep were feeding; it is true they looked shaggy and uncomfortable, and not at all like the snow-white lambs of the pastures; and their food was but cabbage leaves and such like. And yet, placed just there, they served to bring to the mind thoughts of that flock redeemed with precious blood; and of the green pastures and still waters its sheep will one day lie down beside, when He, the Great Shepherd, shall have led them safely through the wilderness. I am sure that Martha herself was no

stranger to such thoughts. One very marked feature in her character was her unvarying contentedness with her hard lot in this life; she never complained of anything, but looked so uniformly on the bright side, that one might have fancied there was no dark one to look upon; she had thoroughly learnt that under-tone of our prayer-book, "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful."

That day, I perceived that her dinner was to consist only of a dish of wee potatoes no bigger than a walnut; not that I was guilty of the indelicacy of peeping into her cupboards and saucepans, but she was out when I went in, so I could not help seeing what had been left exposed. I was not long left alone, however, for the landlady thought fit to "step in," and volunteer her opinion of her new tenant, nearly in these words:—"She is a quiet, good little woman, ma'am; she never quarrels, nor makes a row; and scarce ever goes out, unless it be to Church, where she goes, I believe, nearly every day."

When Martha came in, she gave me a little sketch of her early life. She said she was born in Manchester, and had been brought up both as a week-day and Sunday scholar at one of the old national schools there; and she marked her attachment to these early associations in a very

practical way, namely, by sending her own little girls to the nearest national school in whatever place they happened to be. "For, ma'am," she said, "the old-fashioned ways is the best ways; the old Church, and the old schools." And surely she was right, she had holy Scripture on her side; for thus it is written, "Stand ye in the old ways, and walk in them." She was very much pleased that day because I took her some pinafores of pink or buff cotton, and a waxen baby for her children; which puts me in mind of another trait in her character, that she never presumed on that close spiritual relationship which both of us asserted, to found a claim for any, even the smallest, temporal assistance. But such pleasant intercourse seldom lasts long in this world; and one evening, not very long after, I found Martha under the lime trees, waiting to speak to me. It was to say good-bye, for the iron-work had suddenly failed, and her husband must embark with his family next day for Liverpool, to seek employment there. She said she should get up very early to wash her only gown in time to attend morning service, to have the Church's prayers for those "who travel by water;" and then she should go on board immediately after, and we should see each other no more. So we parted, where it was fit that we should part, for it was there we first met, close

beside our holy and beautiful house. Most likely we shall meet no more in this world; but, walking in the paths of holy obedience and trustful love, I hope I shall one day see her again, in our Father's house in heaven, where the Church militant, with its changes, and its chances, and its sufferings, will be lost in the fruition of the Church triumphant. Even now I sometimes seem to see her with us, when some victorious psalm or glorious anthem rises on high, kneeling, where she used to kneel, the pearly light shedding upon her its transfigured beams, in spots of violet and rose-colour, as if that vile raiment were already changing into the bright robes of immortality. To think of her *thus* is all joy; poor and unlettered though she be, and her name unknown in the Church of her fathers; for, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee; he shall dwell in Thy courts, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEDESMAN.

"No sound is here of tables spread,"
When Joyance lifts her festive head ;
But yet of Peace a deeper sense,
Than in their glad magnificence ;—
And if you ask the reason why,
Nature must own it with a sigh,
"*'Tis suited more for those that die.*"

The Baptistry.

WE have a very interesting view from the summit of S. Michael's Hill, Bristol. Just beneath us, gleaming out from a clump of thick trees, is the old Church dedicated to the mighty archangel, which gives its name to the whole district. There, engirdled by the blue and purple hills, lies our ancient city, piercing the white smoke with its many spires, that are themselves the expressive records of six hundred years of history ; from the Temple, or Church of the priest-soldiers, who used to throng its pillared aisles, all in their snow-white mantles embroidered with the cross of ruby red, (in token of their yet unredeemed vow to recover from the Turks the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem,) down to that sad year of 1650, when

the Rector of Christ Church buried by stealth, and at dead of night, the mangled remains of two who had proved themselves faithful unto death, to their Church and their king, in that season of fierce rebellion against both; and the timid mourners hid their pine-wood torches, and drew in their very breath, for fear they should be discovered and put in prison, because they had presumed to read over those murdered corpses, the blessed, the peaceful, the hopeful Service of the Church of England. But it is a nearer and intermediate object that fixes my eye whenever I visit that hill: nearer in sight, and much nearer in age, although still very old to *me*; I mean the cluster of Almshouses, built on the slope of S. Michael's, not quite two hundred years ago, by Mr. Edward Colston.

We know that in every instance it must be true, because Holy Scripture has said it, that the memory of the just is blessed; but perhaps this truth is seldom so practically taught, and made so plainly apparent, as in the yearly commemoration of him we have just named, which is kept each successive November 13th, being the day on which he was buried. On that day the two hundred children of his charities, dressed in the long quaint purple coats and scarlet hose of a by-gone age, with his widows, old men, and poor sailors, walk in proces-

sion to the various churches, there specially to remember *him*, with the rest of the faithful departed, and there too to acknowledge ourselves as knit together with each other and with them, in the mystical body and fellowship of Christ. On that day too, his marble tomb is crowned with autumn flowers, and at the festal board his name is drank to, in *solemn silence*; for it is felt that *he* belonged to a Body in which quick and dead are united; to whose members death is no evil, and for whom the grave has no fears. "His body is buried in peace, but his name liveth for evermore."

But it is with the Almshouses founded by him on S. Michael's Hill, that we have at present to do; they form a small square, open to the roadside, having a chapel in the centre, and an emerald lawn in front. There, if you visit the place in early spring, you may see the lilac and gold buds of the crocus, or the violet looking out cheerfully upon the snow, from under the scarlet-berried holly and evergreen cypress-trees. Within those low oak doors, we shall see, it is true, old age and infirmity, but infirmity without the dread, and old age above the degradation, of want; for if we go up to the tablet of white marble, which is built into the wall, just under the belfry clock, we see that these Almshouses were endowed for the maintenance of twelve poor *Brethren*, and as many

Sisters; and that provision was also made for the spiritual comfort of the inmates, and for the daily services of the Church, by the appointment of a Chaplain for their little sanctuary. So beautifully did they of old time comprehend the double meaning of our Lord's prayer, "Give us day by day our daily bread;" so well and wisely did *they* carry it out, in this twofold provision for the soul and for the body! Would that *we* too could forget the low, heartless teaching of the *world*, and ceasing to regard each other as so many isolated, solitary individuals, who must either struggle out for themselves an independent existence in the vast mass, or else be smothered in it by the struggles of others, could exchange this cold, selfish system for the teaching of the *Church*, that this "vast mass" is verily and indeed but the One Body of Him whose name is One; with not one really isolated, not one really lonely individual within it, but all, the humble and the exalted, "brethren" and "sisters" in Him. Then, indeed, the double ministry to soul and body, which by God has been joined together, would not be so frequently, by man, put asunder.

One saying of Edward Colston has, on this point, been handed down to posterity. When urged by his friends to marry,—to surround himself with all those appliances of a wealthy home to

which, in the false, though current phraseology of our own day, his large fortune *entitled* him, he replied at once, that "for his part, he felt as if every poor widow was his wife, every destitute orphan his child." We record these words, because while they express his wise desire, in his own experience, to avoid the one, and in the experience of others to soften the other, of those two fearful extremes,—the extreme of want, of misery, and of hopelessness, on the one side,—the extreme of ease, of luxury, and of selfishness, on the other; they also, taken in connexion with the double provision, the spiritual and the temporal character, of all his charities, prove plainly that *he* knew well to whose little ones he was offering the cup of cold water, that he realized the solemn import of those most blessed yet most awful words, which *we* dared never to have uttered, but which, having been uttered by our Redeemer Himself, it is to our eternal loss if we ever dare to *forget*, "*I was hungry—I was thirsty—I was sick—and ye visited Me. Forasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.*"

But it is time we should speak of our own chief attraction to S. Michael's Almshouses; it was through old brother Edward that we first became acquainted with them, and we met *him* (where it would be as well if rich and poor did more fre-

quently meet each other,) in the week-day services of the House of God:—not the little Almshouse chapel, but a fine old church, a long way off; for Edward used to say, that “it had pleased God to bless him with very good health in his old age, and what was more, with a season of rest in a peaceful home;” he said, “he believed these blessings were given him on purpose that he might have more time to get prepared, and ready to die. And so, wherever there was Church Prayers, there he liked to go, to get his heart to learn more and more about the things of the other world.”


It was very lovely to see him thus setting himself so thankfully, so earnestly, so cheerfully, to spend his evening of life with a direct reference to the night of death, which he knew was so soon to follow. Very beautiful too, to see him, as I used to see him, day by day, month after month, his guileless blue eye always reverently fixed on the holy page before him, and his pale face, round which a few thin silver hairs played, wearing always such a peaceful, such an almost radiant smile, that were it not presumptuous to compare the wayfaring pilgrim with the perfected saint, I should liken him to S. Simeon, when in the Temple he blessed God, and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word.”

It is a common remark, that the inmates of Almshouses are the most discontented set of people upon earth; and certainly I have known the saying justified in some cases, where persons who have seen "better days," have allowed themselves to look back peevishly on what they have lost, rather than on those accumulated miseries from which they have been saved by the very shelter which they now so ungratefully undervalue. But a grumbling spirit is not the spirit of an obedient son of our Church, and such an one was old Edward. "How much we have to be thankful for!" was ever the burden of his discourse. Once a thick film gathered over his eyeballs, so that he was afraid he should never be able to read in his beloved books again. A painful operation was recommended, and was performed; and here, at least, there might have been something to grumble at. Nothing of the sort; we only heard of "the mercy, the blessing, of being able once more to see the pleasant daylight;" and of "the good, kind doctor, who had been so clever, and so tender and careful of him." Then he would talk of "the blessing it was, to have an old man to live with him who was pious, and quiet, and who felt like himself;" and of "the blessing he had in his own good health, able to go about, so different from most other old men." It was not so much the

words themselves, as the smile of beaming gratitude that came with the words, and went with glowing shame to my heart, when I thought of what *he* was with "that he had *not*," and of what *I* was "with that I *had*."

It was a pretty sight, when sometimes by way of a great treat, he brought his little grand-children to church with him. They were pretty flaxen-haired girls, with plenty of lilies and roses in their fair faces: he used to make them sit very still, with their hands folded together, looking over grandfather's big prayer-book, as, with his spectacles on his nose, he pointed his finger to spell the long words;—the chants he had taught them off by heart. Indeed, he was remarkable for the pleasure he took in helping others, above all, in the way to heaven. Once, when I had lent him some books, "the Distant Hills" and others, after first expressing his own delight to read about "The beautiful hills, ma'am! Oh! if we could but keep *our* eyes always lifted up to those beautiful hills!"—he immediately asked leave to take "the pretty book" to one who was dying, whom he thought it might soothe and cheer.

Another time I found him in deep trouble; he said he had just returned from the funeral of a poor woman he had known; he had done his best to talk to her, but he was afraid she had died



indifferent and impenitent; and then he shook his head, and looked so sorrowful. Not that there was anything in the least presuming or self-sufficient about him, and as to controversy, he knew nothing of it. He would bring me books to read, whose authors, *I* knew, differed widely on some points, but *he* was only conscious of those on which they *agreed*. The only time I ever heard him allude to such harassing subjects, was one day, when a clergyman who had been personally kind to him, had left our communion for that of the Church of Rome. "Oh ma'am," he said meekly, "if such wise, such clever good men, who know so much, do so, what shall we poor ignorant people do!" However, as he spoke, he seemed to clasp his worn prayer-book all the more tightly under his arm. There was his safeguard; but such as he are always safe; in the cloudy and dark day, their strength is in quietness and confidence; in the midst of the troubled waters they find their rest in OBEEDIENCE.

Dear and dearly beloved old man! Surely it is not without recompense that we obey our Church, when she exhorts us in one of her Homilies, "Be courteous to the poor." Such courtesy is sure to be overpaid. Never, for my own part, shall I forget old Edward's nameless little offices of love.

But I must draw this short sketch to an end.

I remember his once telling me how happy he had felt, because, as he was coming to Church that evening, he was so taken up with the verse, "Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore;" and then, when he got there, the same all-blessed text came over again in the anthem. It is *there*, at God's right hand, that I hope one day to meet him, if only in the meantime I follow him as he followed Christ; for doubtless to such as he belongeth the promise, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And surely, if but for the shelter of one such grey head as his, S. Michael's Almshouses have not been built and endowed in vain.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WAYSIDE PEARL.

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

GRAY'S *Elegy*.

THERE is a village in Somersetshire which seems to combine every beauty both of sea and land. On three sides it is encircled by woods, and slopes, and garden-like plains, sheltered by distant hills of the softest blue. On the fourth it lies open to the sea, which is here the many-tinted Channel sea, striped in rich shades of amethyst and brown. All winter long the myrtle is an outside evergreen, climbing to the upper windows of the vicarage-house, and even during the hardest frosts, one may find the dark purple violets blooming in certain spots. But when the frosts of last winter were over, and Easter-day had come, bright and balmy like itself, and calling into life whole hundreds of

snowdrops and crocuses in the little cottage gardens, one *could not* look at their tiny cups of silver and gold, and not feel that these simple spring-flowers were teaching us, as no others *can*, the lesson of the day, to "look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

The old Church too, which nestles in a sort of cave close to the sea, is an object of no little interest, for it is rich in carved oak, and alabaster tombs, and has an east window, full of glowing lights, reds, purples, and greens, like a bed of anemones;—to my mind, however, it is still more interesting, because any one may see that the rustic people who frequent it do *not* come,

"Before their God to *sit* and *gaze*,"

or to stare at what "Mrs. So-and-so has *got on*!"

From this Church then, on Easter afternoon, in spite of the jubilant Eucharistic anthem still lingering on my ears, I was returning heavy and displeased, for it had occurred to me how *hard* it was that certain other people's lot seemed so bright and soft, whilst mine was so rugged; and of course peace of mind *ends* just where we *begin* to question whether God has indeed well-chosen our inheritance for us.

By and bye I saw an old woman, bowed down and crooked with years, who had her eyes fixed

hard upon me. As a visitor in the place, I had taken it into my head to fancy that the poor "had no claim upon me," and, acting upon this cold, heartless saying, had missed many a wholesome lesson of patience. However, the old woman made me a curtsy, and asked me if I came from Walton? I answered, "no;" but as I now remembered that she was the person who earned a scanty living by picking gravel out of the stone quarries, and had a dim idea about her husband's being sick, I asked her how he was, for the mere sake of saying *something*. The poor creature looked at me. "He be *dead* this seven months, ma'am," (I might have guessed as much by her decent black gown, if I had not been too selfish to think at all,) "and oh how I do *miss* him!" "He worked for you then, I suppose," said I; again too engrossed to think of higher sympathies. "Oh dear no, ma'am! he was past seventy, and he kept the house two years. It was *I* had to do all for *he*. But I miss him, ma'am, indeed I do; it's so *lone* without him, that's how it is."

Poor thing, she was near seventy herself, and yet had thought it no "burden" to maintain her still more aged husband,—and now the one was taken, and the other was left. "And have you no children?" I asked. "No, ma'am, none. And when my work is done, and I go home, and *he's*

not there, it is so LONE." She stopped a little, and then went on—"The squire's lady is just dead, and they say her sons and daughters be very sorry; but oh!" she added, with mournful pathos, "there are plenty of *them*, and they've *got* plenty too, *but my old man was all I had!*"

It seemed to please her to tell her story; so when we came to a stile where our ways parted, she said she would go round with me, though her cottage lay a mile on the other road. I remarked it was a long distance for her to come to Church. "Yes," she said, "it *be* a long way; but just before he died, my old man said to me, '*Old woman, keep to your Church.*' Besides, I laid him there in the churchyard, and so I like to go and be nigh him."

I felt ready to cry. Just then we came upon the beach, on which the late storm had washed tangled masses of sea-weed; but now the sea lay glassy, like a mirror, and brought over me the remembrance of that land where there is no more sea, where child-like faith shall never be deceived, and credulity will be a name unknown.

"Was he afraid to die?" I enquired, at last. "No, ma'am, he was not afraid to die. The doctor came in and said to him, 'Simon, (his name was Simon,) it will soon be over with you.' And by and bye I heard him say something about the Lamb

of God; and so I said to him, 'My dear, I hope the Lord is with you.' 'I hope He'll be with *you*, my dear,' says he. And so he went off like asleep."

My heart was full. Their love was stronger than want, than life with all its sorrows and its labours, even than death itself. And that Easter evening fell cloudless, for in such a memory as this one could not help forgetting all that is perplexing of our intermediate state of woe, and care, and daily vexation, in an all-blessed certainty that the Lord our God *shall* come, and all His saints with Him; and *then* the crooked shall be made straight, for "at evening-time it shall be light."

CHAPTER XV.

MY GRANDPAPA.

The sweet remembrance of the just
Shall flourish when he sleeps in dust.

PSALM cxii. *N. Version.*

It is more than eighty years since my grandfather was born. He lived near that green vale in which the calm ruins of Fountain's Abbey admonish us, against our will, of the better taste and more generous piety of our forefathers. There, too, are still to be seen the mouldering yew-trees, under which the stranger monks rested, when, fresh from the forest wilds of Citeaux, they planned here that holy and beautiful house, the first and noblest of their order in England. It must have been by a not uncommon contradiction, that my grandfather loved to dwell on the old stories of that warrior age, for his own loving-kindness and gentle courtesies, his gracious blue eyes and silver hair, bespoke him far more fitly placed among "rich men, furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations."

In an old house on the hill side, with carved gable-ends, and curiously-twisted brick chimneys peeping out from the apple and pear trees,—there his fathers had “dwelt among their own people.” That garden, to this day, produces nothing but old-fashioned flowers, such as lilies and roses, golden daffodils, double purple stocks, and bloody wall-flowers; for my grandfather had an honest love of all *old* things. Almost the only thing that roused his meek spirit to anger was a proposal to part with some of his land at an advantageous price. He answered nearly in the words of Naboth, “The Lord forbid it me, that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers.”

But, above all other novelties, he suspected novelties in matters of religion. He would say how it was “a good old custom” to go to Church, and to read the Bible daily—not, indeed, because he was ignorant that the obligation to these things lay in a higher sanction than that of mere antiquity, but because he felt that, for a plain man like himself, it was enough to pray the same prayers, to kneel by the same seat, where for generations his forefathers had knelt before him. And there was something so sacred in this humility and child-like trust, this entire renunciation of self and of all self-chosen ways, that I never remember any one of the bold, rash spirits of our age pre-

suming to break in upon the perfect peace of the old man by a rude or disputatious question.

And so he remained, Sunday after Sunday, praying, like Hooker, "the prayers of his mother, the Church of England," reading at home from the ancient pages of his father's Bible, and all the while unconscious of the raging billows of controversy without, for his "strength was to sit still." Often he would take us by the hand, and ramble through the green pastures, beside the honeysuckle hedges; or talk with his tenants,—time-honoured men like himself, and who loved him well, for he took an interest in all that belonged to them, from the labourers and children of the homestead to the black-faced sheep on the common, or even the tortoiseshell kitten in the chimney corner. Guileless and child-like himself, he was very fond of children, and on these occasions nothing angered him in us, unless we shewed marks of a greedy, covetous, or unthankful temper; if, for instance, we failed to make courteous reply or to give ready thanks for the strawberries and flowers, and kindly greetings of the cottagers. Indeed he was a true son of her who is "the mother of fair love, and fear, and knowledge, and holy hope;" and these first principles were, as it were, ingrained in his daily life!

Happy old man, thus to have placed his earthly

happiness in things which do not change,—the Church of God, and that which is, in truth, a running commentary on it, the fair things of God's visible creation.

And calmly, gently, silently, like himself, the silver cord was loosed, and he felt himself going through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Through life he had sought peace, and ensued it; and now the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, was with him, and made him the son of peace indeed. For, having long regarded death as but the close of a long journey, necessary indeed to bring him to the haven and the home where he would be; yet still, in some of its stages, rough and wearisome even to him; so now, when he actually tasted of the water of the river over which he was to go, it proved sweet and very pleasant. One only request he made—that on the shoulders of his faithful tenants, with no pomp of funeral apparel, he might be borne to his grave. Then, with a quiet gesture, he forbade all earthly concerns to approach him, and laid himself down like a wearied dove.

"Peace, peace, none but Christ," he said. They asked him if he wanted anything? "Yes, I want to go home; carry me home." And already the angels were on their way to deliver his spirit from the burden of the flesh, and to bear it on its home-

ward journey; for as he raised his eyes to bless by name each member of his family, "it came to pass (if we may reverently say it) that while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

CHAPTER XVI.

DEAR WILLIE.

Heaven in the depth and height is seen ;
On high among the stars, and low
In deep clear waters ; all between
Is earth, and tastes of earth ; even so
The Almighty One draws near
To strongest seraphs *there*, to weakest infants *here*.

God's angels keep the eternal round
Of praise on high, and never tire ;—
His lambs are in His temple found
Early, with all their hearts desire.
*They boast not to be free,
They grudge not to their Lord meek ear and bended knee.
Lyra Innocentium.*

ONE of old has made this beautiful remark, that whereas the holy Gospel delivered by God's ministers resembles the morning light, shining through a window of clear glass,—yet, when that Gospel is enforced, not by the lips only, but also in the life of the instructor, it becomes like those ancient church lattices, rich in Scripture stories, that con-

vey the same light in colours of rubies, and emeralds, and amethysts, through the living forms of saints, of apostles, and of martyrs.*

This is the blessed way in which it has often pleased God to teach me His heavenly truths. We have just spoken of one whose hoary head was a crown of glory ; we come now to tell of another to whom " an unspotted life was old age, who, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time ;" but of both it may be written, " As thou art, so were they ; each one resembled the children of a king."

When I first knew Willie, rather more than five years ago, he was about twelve years old ; he used to sit next me at Church, and one could not help observing his attentiveness to the prayers, and even to the sermon — a thing so unusual in boys of his age. By and bye, we contracted a warm friendship for each other, and this gave me many opportunities of seeing his obliging and generous temper : it showed itself to all who came near, because it began at home. His mother, his little brothers, his school-fellows, and the poor,—all these came in for it in one form or other. I knew one little pensioner of his, a boy with a club foot, who had long cause to feel the loss of Willie's

* Vide, George Herbert, " Church Windows."

alms; indeed, I believe he spent nearly all his pocket-money in alms-giving and flowers: these last he used to rear in a little garden bed at school, that he might have some of his own to bring to his mother. I have one of his favourite plants now—a sweet-scented geranium, which is covered, in its season, by small lilac flowers, veined with claret. Delicate and fragile, like himself, it has, nevertheless, long outlived its gentle owner. Alas! not it, but he, is withered “like a flower of the field.”

It is not to be expected that there should be anything startling, or showy, or what the world calls “striking,” in the short lives of such as Willie. Man must needs display *his* treasures; but God's chosen ones are also His hidden ones, brought up before Him in secret and in silence, till they are meet to be transplanted into His heavenly kingdom. And yet it was very evident to us all, how Willie sought to fulfil, even to anticipate, every command of *his* earthly parents; and especially, like the holy child Jesus, the least wishes of his mother. For this he toiled at his little garden ring,—for this he petted his baby brothers, and worked almost harder at his lessons than his failing strength began to permit. “If I can but please my own dear mother;”—this was his highest earthly ambition. He seemed, moreover, to have an instinctive consciousness of, and a sensitive shrinking

from, the presence of sin in others: such a delicate sense and perception of defilement as is given to those little ones of Christ's flock, who are soon, and for ever, to "walk with Him in white." *We* could not detect the taint where he did, and we laughed at him for being "so fastidious:" but we have often thought of him since, when we witnessed the open falling away of some from whom he thus withdrew himself. And neither was there anything violent, anything alarming, in the approaches of his last sickness. Literally, he faded away like a flower. A gentle languor, a calm decay, fell upon him, which at last induced so much weakness that he was hastily brought home from school, and medical advice obtained. Still, although serious symptoms were admitted, every hope was expressed that nursing, and rest, and fresh air would speedily restore him. I remember I was sent for to hear this opinion, and to take a walk with my favourite, and with his brothers; but as the exercise seemed too much for him, we put the three children into a little donkey-gig, following ourselves on foot. Willie sat in the middle, and when they had gone a little way we remarked how he put one arm fondly round each of the little ones. His mother has often reminded me of it; perhaps something within had admonished him that it would be the last time, for in another day or two I found him

confined to the sofa,—his cheek was flushed, and he was drinking iced water to ease his internal fever. It seemed a great effort to him to do it, but with all his wonted graciousness he took my hand, and smiled a sweet reply to my good wishes. Next day he was unable to rise, and his recovery was declared to be hopeless.

From this time his weakness became so great that he could hardly speak, but there was still the same patience and consideration for others. Not very long even before his death, he saw his aunt's brooch about to fall off, and immediately raised his dying hand to prevent the accident. Soon after, seeing his mother by his bed, he smiled, and pointed upward. She guessed his meaning, and asked him, "My darling, do you want to go to heaven, to the Lord Jesus?" "Yes," he answered. "And would you like *me* to go with you?" "Oh yes," he replied, with a smile of such overpowering reality, that for a moment she forgot the bands of flesh that detained her.

The season was early spring, and bright tufts of primroses and hyacinths enamelled the gravel walk, as I went up to the house to ask after him next day. The servant, as she opened the door, laid her hand on my arm;—"He has this moment breathed his last," she whispered. I turned away, and oh! how those spring flowers sickened on my

sight. Yet, in another minute, I had remembered they were all in keeping, for what but joy, hope, gladness, should go along with that young spirit to the gates of paradise, over whom death had passed like a white cloud in a summer afternoon, and taken him into the shade, and given him no fear at all ?



